

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Classic Walks on
New Zealand's
South Island



FREE
inside

Sea kayaking
the south coast

Flinders Ranges

Victorian
alpine river
exploration

Kosciuszko
Track Notes

Tasman
National Park
overview

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sleeping mat**
surveys

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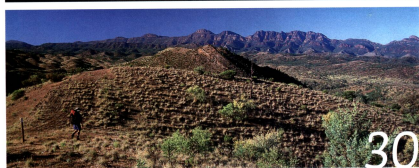
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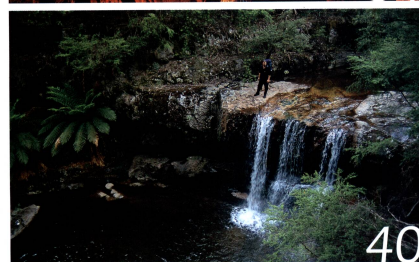
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Wild

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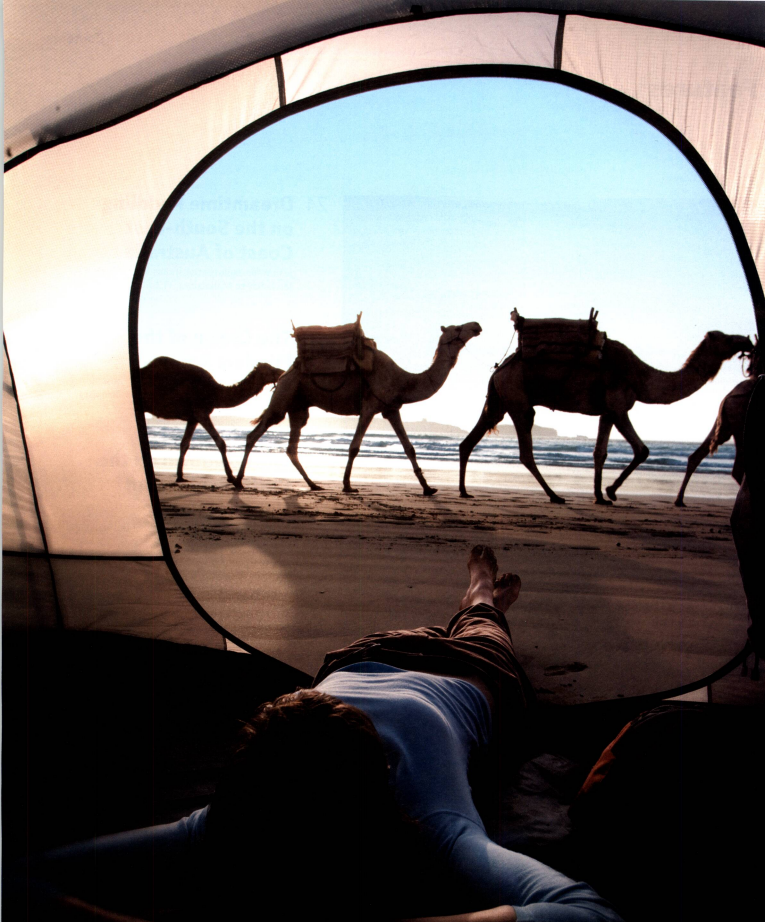
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The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



Cover Tim White and Sally Goulet are all smiles as they tackle the climb from the Herbert River Gorge, north Queensland. Steven Nowakowski



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A leadership issue

Harnessing your 'green power'

THESE DAYS, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES HAVE become mainstream, and media outlets run major stories on climate change and other topics on a daily basis. Not only is the environment receiving more coverage than ever, but the issues are increasingly seen to influence voting, purchasing and investment decisions. Government and business have recognised this and are keen to promote their green credentials whenever possible. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sort through the marketing spin to make informed decisions.


Green electricity is a case in point. When signing up for electricity from '100 per cent renewable sources', you may not be getting all that you hoped. Instead of driving investment into renewable sources and increasing the sustainability of Australia's energy supply, you may simply be selecting power from hydro schemes that were completed decades ago. And without asking questions as to the make-up of your 'renewable power', you won't know the difference.

In the case of green electricity, the GreenPower accreditation programme is one of a number of resources developed to make your decision easier. In many other situations, however, opportunities for positive change have been missed due to a lack of leadership. Whether in the formation of government policy, business direction or community decision-making, this leadership is necessary to emphasise the importance of the environment in every decision.

With the aim of increasing my ability to make a difference, I applied for a place in the Future Sustainability Leaders Program 2007 (www.csl.org.au)—and was successful. 'Sustainability Projects', conceived of and worked on by participants throughout the nine-month course, are a big part of the course. In the case of my group of three, the plan is to help the outdoors industry to reduce its environmental impact. For a big-picture aim, it's not a bad one! We're starting small, working with a few companies to develop a simple, streamlined strategy for reducing impacts that can be used by interested businesses.

And this is where Wild comes in. For the last 27 years, Wild has not only been at the forefront of Australian outdoors publication, but has led the way in celebrating our wild places and working to protect them. By heavily reducing advertising rates and making substantial donations to conservation organisations, publicising environmental issues and adopting practical measures such as using recycled paper for the magazine and GreenPower in the office, the company has led through both words and actions. As a continuation of this environmental leadership, Wild Publications will not only be supporting our Sustainability Project, but has also undertaken to reduce its own impacts. Over the next six months, we will investigate measures to increase the business's sustainability—from office setup to printing, supply and distribution—

and make changes where possible. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Sustainability is not only an end point but a process, and an important element of that process is education and involvement. Every decision you make—from buying groceries to investments and voting—has the ability to contribute to positive change. Obvious choices about light bulbs and electricity at home can lead to bigger changes when brought to work, and engagement with businesses, community groups and governments can lead to much bigger pay-offs. Of course, you can't do everything—environmental superheroes notwithstanding. But, by thinking carefully about your decisions, and making active rather than passive choices, you can positively influence others' actions as well as improve your own workplace, home, health and community. Each person has a voice to influence others, purchasing power to change business behaviour and a vote with which they can affect government. By recognising and using your own 'green power', you can help to change the future. 

Megan Holbeck
editorial@wild.com.au

We get excited about every new issue of Wild, but this time we've notched it up a step—we simply couldn't wait to see a printed copy. This is not only because of the fantastic content, including a new WildGUIDE to simplify your next kiwi venture. We've also had a complete magazine redesign, something we hope you've noticed (and appreciated!) even if you can't pinpoint the exact changes. We could tell you about the fancy new fonts, the consistent colour palettes and readability improvements, but the details probably only matter to us. What we hope you notice is that the magazine is easy to read, with a clean, professional layout—and, most importantly, looks great! We're really happy with the result; let us know what you think. We look forward to your feedback.

To emphasise our commitment to the environment, we've also moved the Green Pages to a more prominent position in the magazine. We believe that as environmental issues have become more pressing, the importance of this department has grown. This has been reflected in improvements in its content and appearance, and now in its new location between Track Notes and the Gear Surveys.

We hope you enjoyed our first e-newsletter, and appreciated its exclusive content, offers and images. If you didn't receive it, what can we say—you missed out! However, you don't have to let it happen again. Visit our web site at www.wild.com.au and sign up to become part of our online community.

Wild was saddened to hear of the death of Nick Hartley on 25 June. Nick worked at York Press, Wild's printer, in the magazine's early years and was an integral part of the publication's success. His contribution and support will always be remembered.



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Grampians MALLED

Wilderness goes Disney

THE MOST POPULAR PART OF VICTORIA'S Grampians National Park, the Wonderland Range—or at least a single track into the range—was finally reopened to the general public in April...What's the area like? Seriously damaged. The January 2006 fire itself has not been the problem. In fact, what is remarkable is how much vegetation was not affected. For example, in many cases the forest canopy was not burnt, much of the fire being confined to undergrowth...There is evidence of remarkably few 'dangerous' trees having been felled; the cliffs are not fire damaged.

Notwithstanding relatively minor fire damage, the landscape has been seriously, and permanently, scarred. It's no wonder that Parks Victoria (PV) and one or two commercial operators... bang on about 'all the work necessary' before the area could be reopened: the fire has been used as the opportunity for a major upgrade of tourist infrastructure! The work goes far beyond replacing burnt infrastructure and removing 'dangerous' trees. Examples:

- The walking track has been significantly widened, smoothed and 'upgraded', including the addition of edging rocks. Much of it is now vehicle width.
- Hundreds of substantial sandstone blocks... have been mechanically quarried from nearby hillsides (by drilling and blasting) and placed as steps and...paving on the track.
- A metal walkway (with two benches for the weary!) has been installed over a sandy section of the track unaffected by either fire or erosion.
- There are three new paved and cemented rest areas, two with cemented stone benches.
- A walking track has been 'upgraded' to a vehicle track (closed to walkers) going to one of the higher and less visited parts of the range, apparently to facilitate the track construction referred to above...Previously, there was no four-wheel-drive (car) access to the upper part of the range.
- A long-abandoned side track, part of the new 'Forest Loop Track', has been brought 'up to the standard' of the main track.
- There are additional signs (including ones painted...on the rock) and barriers (including post-and-rail fencing).

The result is to turn the 'Wonderland Range tourism experience' into something as similar as possible to conditions encountered in a suburban shopping mall. As has been observed earlier (Wildfire, Wild no 104), PV has used the bushfires as a pretext for redirecting management policy towards 'developing' the Grampians for mass tourism at the expense of those interested in more independent activities in an unspoiled natural environment. (After a series of approaches from me, PV finally recently acknowledged this: '...a viable and sustainable tourism industry is part of the region's economic security. Priority [my emphasis] has been given



to reflect this in the rebuilding process.')} This is another example of the outcome of such a policy. The natural environment is the loser.

Chris Baxter
Glen Iris, Vic

Navigating heated arguments on the superlative-laden, Victorian seaside stroll

My wife Rose and I completed the Great Ocean Walk in January this year—as mentioned in the title 'A Great Ocean Walk' in Wild no 105, it sure is a great walk!

It concerns me, however, that the author of the article does not mention that you must register and pay nightly camping fees with Parks Victoria to do the walk. Your itinerary must be submitted—how many nights/days and which walk-in campsites you intend to visit—and you are then allocated a particular tent site...You cannot vary from this itinerary as other people have also booked and paid for specific sites...

The author relates making daily decisions as to whether to use the walk-in or drive-in sites, whether to miss one and move on to the next, and even which tent site to use!...This is in conflict with the whole purpose of registering, booking and submitting your walk plans with PV so that it can manage the walk and 'legal' walkers can enjoy their experience.

On the last night of our walk, we were confronted by two men who had illegally taken a tent site registered and paid for by another walker. They claimed they were unaware of the situation, despite walking past a large and obvious sign...A heated argument ensued and, as a group of fellow walkers, we convinced them to leave. This trouble at the end of a long, hard day...left a sour taste in our mouths.

It is hard enough to find a place to walk and enjoy these days without having to put up with this kind of attitude...I must add that I totally disagree with Bron Willis about the GOW camp-



'Excellent walking experiences' on the Grand Canyon—Pinnacle track, the Grampians, Victoria. Left, wishful thinking: donations box at the start of the recently 'upgraded' track. Both photos
Chris Baxter

sites: there was no comparison between them and the public, drive-in sites. In my opinion, the GOW walk-in sites were superior in every way, and PV is to be congratulated.

Brian Davis
Brisbane, Qld

I enjoyed reading the article 'A Great Ocean Walk' in Wild no 105 as I have walked parts of it and am planning to walk the whole track soon. The article states that 'A 1:100 000 Meridian topographical map is also available, covering a large area without much detail, but is not essential as navigation is not difficult. The track is not marked on the map.' The article must be referring to the first edition, as the track is marked on Meridian's second edition *The Otways Touring Guide*, published in 2006. This topographical map is quite detailed and marks all seven Great Ocean Walk walk-in campsites.

Even though navigation may not be difficult, I recommend that walkers always carry a topographical map and a compass.

David Charles
Newtown, Vic

Prom permits, permission and problems

In Wild no 105 I was interested to see Maree Eagles's letter and Travis Easton's response regarding Travis's article on off-track walking at

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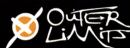
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Wilsons Prom (*Wild* no 104). Travis suggested that he didn't get a permit...because in his experience such permits aren't issued unless a scientific purpose is attached.

My club, the Victorian Mountain Tramping Club, has been running at least one off-track trip a year to Wilsons Prom since 1985...for all of which we have had permits from Parks Victoria...The guidelines we follow are: send a letter to the ranger in charge at Tidal River at least a month in advance of the trip, mention that we know the rules (no fires, etc), and attach a map with the route and campsite marked. (When I've left the campsite off PV has asked me to send another map.) About a week or two later I ring the ranger to see if it has been approved. We've never had any scientific justification...and we've always received approval.

The places we've been include the full length of the Vereker Range, Mt Latrobe, Mt Wilson, the Boulder Range, Sealers Cove to Five Mile Beach, and the east coast from the northernmost tip of the Prom to Waterloo Bay. We also walked from Waterloo Bay to the lighthouse before the track was put in. This includes camping at spots away from the official campsites.

I'd like to know more about Travis's problems. Did he really try to get a permit? Or was the problem that he was walking alone?

Jim Harker
Noble Park, Vic

Wild no 105: wonderful!

As a subscriber to *Wild* from its birth, I've always enjoyed Quentin Chester's contributions. None more so than his latest, a fitting tribute to Chris Baxter, *Wild*'s founder. A wonderful article and a story of a wonderful man, a pivotal figure in Australian climbing.

Adrian Cooper
Queens Park, NSW

Wild no 105 was a great issue—I liked the Chris B profile, Cam Walker's bit and especially that beautiful Rob Jung picture of the Stirling Ranges. Also all the rest!

Rob Blakers
South Hobart, Tas

Very impressed with this issue (*Wild* no 105), especially the Great Ocean Walk. My only suggestion would be to have more tips and tricks published from all the readers...It would be a great way to share information and gain new skills...

Frank English
Rostrevor, SA

In *Wild* no 105 in the Scroggin section you report that the Horse Yard Flat hut was gone. I was there on Queen's Birthday weekend and the hut—of galvanised iron construction—is still there. There wasn't any evidence of fire in Horse Yard that I remember and the Moroka River looked pristine in comparison to a lot of other rivers we saw that weekend.

John Van Leeuwen
Lilydale, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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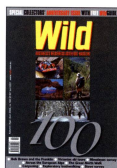
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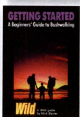
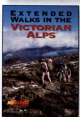
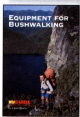
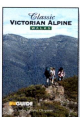
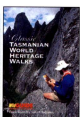
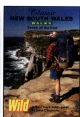
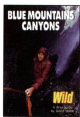
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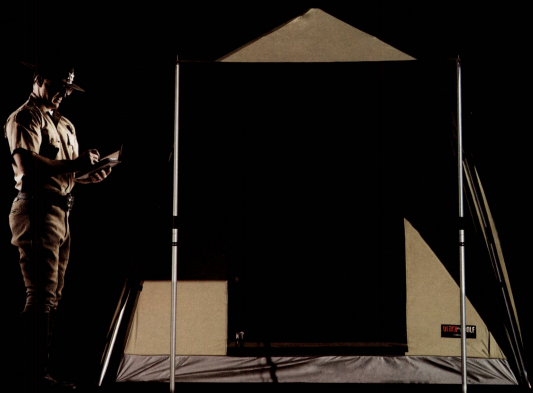
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Lock aims for 8000 metres

Twelve down, two to go

Andrew Lock's quest to be the first Australian to summit all 14 of the world's 8000 metre peaks is one step closer following his successful ascent of Annapurna I (8091 metres, an Australian first), in the Nepalese Himalaya. Annapurna I has had the least number of ascents of any 8000 metre peak and is by far the most dangerous statistically. Lock's first attempt on this mountain in 2005 ended in tragedy, with the death of one climber and serious injury to three others when the team was struck by a collapsing ice cliff. This year, despite most climbers abandoning their attempts because of extremely dangerous avalanche conditions, Lock and two other companions forced their way through the difficulties over a number of weeks. They finally reached the knife-edge summit on 24 May after several horror nights crammed into a tiny tent in gale-force winds and deep, avalanche-prone snow slopes.

Lock described the climb as the most dangerous he has done. It is the 12th summit in his quest for the 14 8000 metre peaks, leaving just Shisha Pangma (8046 metres) and Makalu (8481 metres). He will be conducting a lecture tour about the expedition. To find out more, visit www.andrew-lock.com

Lock on the upper slopes of Annapurna's North Face on summit day, 24 May, at around 7800 metres. *Fernando Gonzalez*



National cross-country ski team news

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow...Finn Marsland details the effects of fickle weather

There are times when you wonder about being an Australian cross-country skier. Last winter was terrible, while this year Europe had a disastrous season with many events being cancelled and postponed. The Australian Team for the World Junior and Under-23 Championships was left stranded without their main event of the season, and most of the athletes had to head home. It's easy to imagine people becoming disheartened.

Things change though—by mid-July there was more than a metre of snow at the National Team Training Centre at Falls Creek, Victoria. All over the tracks, skiers from beginner to national standard were skiing their socks off and grinning from ear to ear.

At the start of July, 16 National Team athletes completed a great week of training at Falls Creek, working predominantly on endurance and technique. The attitude amongst the team was overwhelmingly positive, with some of the World Cup team athletes starting to see their long-term goals within reach.

The competition part of the season was getting into swing, with a few elite international skiers indicating that they were coming for the Kangaroo Hoppet at Falls Creek on the last weekend of August. These included Pascal Grab and Sandra Gredig of Switzerland, Thomas Freimuth of Germany, and Canadians Milaine Theriault, Brian and



The women's ski team enjoying plenty of snow at the Falls Creek Training Camp in July. *Finn Marsland*

Robin McKeever. Australian contenders include multiple past Hoppet winners Ben Sim, Ben Derrick, Clare-Louise Brumley, KT Calder and Andrew Mock, who placed fifth in the 2007 Sapporo Ski Marathon.

For more information, please visit www.hoppet.com.au/xc

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Across the Sahara on foot



The Constant walker, complete with camel caravan

Three years ago, Australian Paula Constant put on a rucksack and began walking from Trafalgar Square in London. Since then, she has walked more than 11 000 kilometres through eight countries, including nearly 8000 kilometres through the Sahara with her own camel caravan. The latest leg of her expedition is a bid to become the first woman to make a solo foot crossing from the

west to the east of the Sahara, accompanied only by her camels and local Bedouin guides. Constant was recently back in Australia for a three-month hiatus following political disruption in Niger. She left her camels behind, but hopes to return in October.

Along the way, Constant has battled conditions ranging from metre deep snow in the Spanish Pyrenees, to 50°C heat and sandstorms in the Sahara. Learning how to plait and roast goats' intestines on a camel dung fire is one of the more delightful of the gourmet experiences

Paula Constant and her camel train in Mauritania in November 2006. Paula Constant collection

she has encountered. On her next leg, Constant will walk with Tuareg nomads along the renowned salt-trade route from Agadez to Bilma, a 630 kilometre stretch of barren desert in Niger with only two wells. For further information on Constant's journey across the Sahara, please visit www.constanttrek.com

Australian Mountain Running Championships

John Harding introduces this year's champions

This year's Australian Mountain Running Championships were held at Canberra's Mt Majura in June. Scott McTaggart of Canberra led from start to finish to win the Australian men's title for the third year in a row, completing the three-lap, 13.3 kilometre course in 59 minutes, 1 second. Wollongong's Stephen Brown was second in 59 minutes, 56 seconds and Mark Bourne of Canberra was third in 61 minutes, 24 seconds.

Queensland veteran Hubertien Wichers followed up her third placing in the 45 kilometre Six Foot Track race by taking out the Australian women's title over nine kilometres in 48 minutes, 4 seconds. Sydney's Cindy King claimed second in 48 minutes, 41 seconds, 14 seconds ahead of Angela Bateup of Yass.

Matthew Bayley of Melbourne ran a world-class 38 minutes, 2 seconds for the junior men's

nine kilometres. Veronica Wallington of Canoewindra in NSW smashed the junior course record held by world orienteering champion Hanny Allston, resetting the standard at 22 minutes, 9 seconds for the 4.5 kilometre race.

In the veteran group, world under-50 long-distance mountain-running champion Trevor Jacobs won the under-55 8.8 kilometre race in 44 minutes, 43 seconds and kept going to finish sixth in the open event. Western Australian Bruce Wilson ran a brilliant 24 minutes, 52 seconds to take out the 4.4 kilometre under-60 championship. Canberra's Bob Chapman won the under-70 in 29 minutes, 56 seconds, while Rad Leovic, just back from a bronze medal in the World Duathlon, ran 36 minutes, 7 seconds to be the best under-75. Sue Archer ran a fast 26 minutes, 53 seconds to win the under-55 4.4 kilometre race and Caroline Campbell, also a World Duathlon bronze medalist, took 32 minutes, 50 seconds to win the under-60 event.

Greg Waite on Queensland's popular race series

Queensland's Trail Running Association (TRAQ) was formed in late 2006. On 17 June it organised three events at Lake Manchester, Brisbane Forest Park, covering 33, 17 and seven kilometres. Bradley Smith won the 33 kilometre race in 2 hours, 29 minutes, 9 seconds, with Susannah Harvey-Jamieson the first female home in 3 hours, 49 minutes, 48 seconds. Christian Cobbold won the popular 21 kilometre race in one hour, 22 minutes, 30 seconds, with the first female, Julia Davies, 19 minutes behind.

The day was so popular that TRAQ is now considering a number of others: one event in northern Brisbane Forest Park, runs on the Mapleton Great Walk in November and Rainbow Beach in February, and a marathon on Fraser Island in 2008. For more details, visit www.runtrail.org

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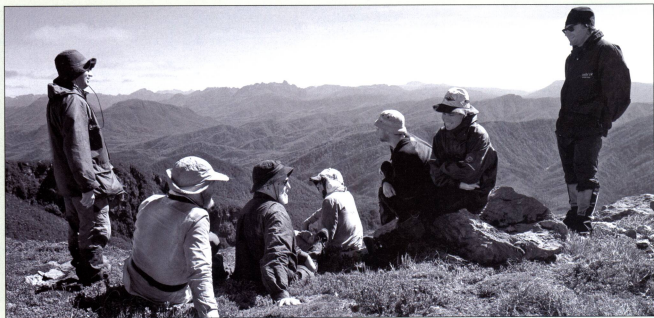
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'Every day out of Tasmania is a day wasted'



An interview with Dave Harris, peak bagger extraordinaire, by John McLaine

The quote above shows the single-minded focus needed to accumulate ascents of all the mountains in Tasmania. It's never been done, but now only the Provis Hills stand between Tasmanian bushwalker Dave Harris and his completion of this monumental task. Dave shared a cuppa and a few peak-bagging yarns with John McLaine recently.

Dave, where does the inspiration to climb every mountain in Tasmania come from?

It just evolved over time. I got the peak-bagging bug seriously in 1982, but I've always walked. I started bushwalking in the 1960s and did lots of walks with Christine and our kids when they were young. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s we used to go walking a lot as a family. We had a black-and-white map of the Wellington Range and most weekends we'd complete a different section of track, until we had coloured in all of the tracks on the entire range. In the school holidays we used to go and camp somewhere, and as the boys grew older I'd entice them to come walking by giving them \$5 for each peak they bagged!

You got really serious about bagging all 465 peaks in 1982?

I became an active member of the Hobart Walking Club and started doing serious trips about that time. I didn't think I'd be the first to complete all the peaks, but I guess I did get the ambition to do them all back then.

What does it take to do the job? Determination?

Determination, time commitment, and lack of other interests! A common thread amongst

many of the walkers who've got close is that they either don't have kids, or their kids have grown up and left.

You've made some great friendships over the years of peak bagging. Is it more about rivalry or cooperation?

Companionship, I suppose, but the clubs have had some great rivalries over the years. Launceston is the most competitive—in the 1980s and 1990s a lot of walks would turn into races.

Over the last few years you've fallen in with a bunch of hard cases all determined to bag the lot. Phil Dawson, Paul Geeves, Kent Lillico...all of whom are breathing down your neck.

Paul is very close. He only has a handful left.

Do you reckon there's a chance someone else might have already done it on the quiet?

I've thought about that a lot. There are a lot of superb walkers out there. I've worried about a few.

Who?

Grant Dixon, Andrew Hughes perhaps. Yourself?

Did you ever have any ambition to do adventure trips beyond Tasmania?

When I was a young bloke I wanted to go to South America, Patagonia, but that's all. You know the Mountain Designs slogan 'Gear for places you'd rather be'? Well, this is it! I'm here already! I'd rather be in Tassie! I haven't even been to New Zealand to walk. My mates always laugh when I say, 'Every day out of Tasmania is a day wasted'.

What's been the most memorable peak? Hardest, scrubbiest, worst weather?

Well there's hard and short and hard and long. Mt Everitt took five attempts but I did

A party of Tasmania's most prolific peak baggers survey the wilderness from the unnamed northern summit of the scrub-bound Louisa Range. Dave Harris is third from left. Other walkers are Paul Geeves (left), Phil Dawson, Kent Lillico, Matt Brain, Dax Noble and Robert Daniels. John McLaine

it easily in the end with Christine. Mt Riveaux used to be hard before the logging roads got so close. Mt Braddon with Ken Felton and Dax Noble was one of the toughest short trips: day one was from Scotts Peak all the way down to the Spring River, before an 11-hour day—seven hours up through bawera, some almost vertical, then four hours back to camp. Cinder Hill was a memorable peak for scrub.

The recent trip to Princess Range was also hard. We paddled kayaks up the Gordon River to the junction of the Franklin, and I fell out on Big Eddy. Kent lost his glasses in the Gordon. It was horrible, cold and miserable. When we finally got walking we had five hard days in implicate rainforest and bawera to the summit and back.

Tell me about your plans for Provis Hills?

Bugged if I know why, but we're going back over Mt Louisa for another try!

That's cruel. Is your body going to stand up to it?

I'm 67 now and the body is breaking up. My knee problem gives me lots of strife but it is better. Now my hip is on its way out.

Have you planned a summit celebration?

We might take a few goodies. Phil's talking about leaving a bottle or two at Louisa River. Good luck with Provis Hills. We look forward to hearing when you've finally bagged every peak in Tasmania!

Tasmania's Three Capes Track development

Chris Bell fills us in

Early last year the Tasmanian Government announced a feasibility study into the development of a new 'Great Bushwalk' on the Tasman Peninsula, dubbed the Three Capes Track. Concerns were expressed regarding the project's practicality and why it was a priority (*Wild* no 103); the release of the completed feasibility study in May did nothing to allay such concerns. In fact, it has raised further concerns regarding the process generally and the blinkered vision of the proponents.

The proposed four-to-six-day walk, potentially extending from Eaglehawk Neck to Nubeena, would take in Capes Hauy, Pillar and Raoul, and use boat transport for some sections. There are existing tracks throughout the area (see article in this issue) that are used by many walkers for day and overnight walks, with some tracks constructed by local walkers. The Three Capes proposal would entail a major track upgrade and the construction of new tracks in currently undisturbed areas. Considerable infrastructure is proposed for each overnight node, up to five of which may be needed, with comfortable public huts for 60 people, rangers' huts, and commercial huts with toilet and shower facilities. Much of this will be in sections of the park that are currently wild. A fee of up to \$200 has been suggested for walking the track, with associated restrictions and the banning of other overnight walking. This would essentially be a commercialisation of the walking experience.

In order to proceed, significant amendments will have to be made to the Tasman National Park Management Plan—for example, the plan doesn't provide for the construction of huts. This will need formal public input, of which there has been little to date.

Tasmania is the only state in which the Parks & Wildlife Service (PWS) resides within the tourism agency. It is hard to escape the conclusion that this ill-thought project is being driven by some cargo-cult-type mentality, based on a philosophy of managing national parks primarily as tourist theme parks rather than for the conservation of the natural values they were established to protect.

The Three Capes Track is not the only inappropriate development in the pipeline for the Tasman Peninsula. Construction of a luxury tourist lodge is proposed for a private land enclave at Crescent Bay, three kilometres south of Port Arthur. Birds Tasmania and other groups are concerned that the lodge and associated activities are likely to impact on the natural values of its surroundings, especially the rare and endangered birds nesting in the area. This would be particularly so if scenic helicopter flights are established, as is rumoured. However, a recent rejection of the proposal by Tasman Council may lead to the developer rethinking his plans.

Scroggin



Roger Chao (left) and Linda Beilharz in the last four days on the Greenland ice cap. They encountered bulletproof blue ice, which made travel very tiring and slow. *Rob Rigato*

Greenland traverse

Australian adventurers Roger Chao, Rob Rigato and Linda Beilharz have returned from a successful 36-day traverse of Greenland from coast to coast. Their trip was far from uneventful, with the trio experiencing the full might of the katabatic winds, which destroyed one of their tents and damaged the other. They also faced temperatures as low as -35°C , while Chao sprained a knee, forcing them to abandon their plans to complete the traverse unsupported. On the carbon-neutral expedition, they also took time out to interview local Inuit people to find out how climate change was affecting their lifestyle and culture. They hope to use this footage in a forthcoming documentary on the impact of global warming.

Overland Track fees increase by 50 per cent

Chris Bell reports that the fee to walk Tasmania's popular Overland Track has been increased to \$150. The booking system that regulates numbers on the track between November and April appears to have been successful in controlling walkers' social and physical impacts, with the track fee funding maintenance and track infrastructure. Nevertheless, by increasing the fee by 50 per cent only two years after it was first introduced, the PWS has neither garnered confidence that it can get its sums right, nor reassured walkers that further dramatic changes may not be imminent.

Money for High Country huts

In March the Victorian Government allocated \$60 000 to assist volunteer groups to restore High Country huts that were damaged during

the 2006 fires. The money is part of a \$138 million recovery package to help rebuild and restore bushfire-ravaged communities across the state. Perhaps some of that money will go towards rebuilding the Howarth shelter at Pikes Flat, which has recently been added to the list of huts destroyed during the 2006 fires.

Broken Dam Hut replacement

Harry Hill reports that Broken Dam Hut is going to be the first of a number of huts rebuilt after the recent adoption of a new Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park, which has radically re-evaluated the heritage value of huts. Broken Dam Hut was burnt down in suspicious circumstances in 1998, while six other huts scheduled for rebuilding were burnt during the 2003 fires. Anyone with information that may assist with the restoration of Broken Dam Hut should contact Hill on (02) 6947 2093.

Fire and rain

Chris Baxter reports that Victoria's Grampians are getting back on their feet after the devastating bushfire of January 2006 and the effects of prolonged drought. Slowly—area by area—locations closed after the fire are being reopened, the latest being a single track into the Wonderland Range, and the popular climbing area Bundeale. However, Mt Rosea, the rest of the Wonderland and many other areas still remain closed. See *Wildfire* for more views from the Grampians.

More Muir desert trekking

Jon Muir has completed another amazing desert trek, this time becoming the first person to walk unsupported from the coast to the geographical

centre of Australia. The 1700 kilometre walk took Muir 70 days, during which time he lost 18 kilograms. For most of the way he carried his 26 kilograms of food in a specially designed cart, before abandoning it on day 55, when he could carry his few remaining supplies on his back. Muir said that the drought had made this expedition even tougher than his 2500 kilo-

tions or exploring remote rivers, Faux is one of the top kayakers in the world, winning many events on the World Cup tour.

Forty years for the NPWS

The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service is celebrating its 40th anniversary this October. Between 1–14 October there will be a range of

tribution to the successful campaign to save this unprotected wilderness, photographers met in 2004 to explore the idea for a similar book covering all unprotected areas of the state. Two years of extensive shooting followed, with the final product available from 1 October 2007.

From Wild's brief preview, this stunning book is sure to raise the profile of Tasmania's wilderness areas, which still remain under threat from logging, mining, and other commercial developments.

Red Cross Murray Marathon

The Red Cross is now calling for participants and volunteers for one of the longest canoe races in the world. The Red Cross Murray Marathon, now in its 39th year, will take place on the Murray River from 27–31 December. Last year, more than 700 paddlers and 3000 volunteer supporters converged on the banks of the Murray for the annual 404 kilometre river adventure. People can take on the Murray on their own or in a relay team. The event is open to people aged 13 and over, with fund-raising a condition of entry. The annual river adventure began in 1969, when Red Cross volunteer Mark Thornthwaite and some friends paddled the river to raise funds, making \$250 in the process. Last year's event generated more than \$300 000. For more details, go to www.redcross.org.au or phone Zan King on (03) 8327 7742. 📞



Tanya Faux surfs a four and a half metre wave to claim silver for Australia in the World Championships held on the Ottawa River, Canada, in September. Louise Urwin

metre traverse of Australia in 2001, as the bush tucker he relied upon for extra nutrition was far less abundant.

No Faux 'Everest'

The Everest Awards are considered to be the 'Oscars' of the outdoors, recognising the top athletes of each year. At the third annual event in the USA this year, Australian kayaker Tanya Faux was awarded an 'Everest' for her outstanding year. Equally at home in freestyle competi-

tions, events and celebrations going on in national parks across NSW, including a fee-free entry day on 7 October. Visit www.nationalparks.com.au to find out more.

Wilderness Endangered

Tasmania's landscape photography community has been working with the Penguin publishing group to produce a high-quality, large-format photographic book called *Endangered*. Following the release of the *Tarkine* book and its con-

Corrections and amplifications

We misspell the name of Gil Hays, the photographer featured in the Folio of Wild no 105. On page 44 of the same issue, the photo caption should have read 'All photos Chris Baxter collection'.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahlan, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahlan, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

October

Snowy Hydro Upper Murray Challenge BR M
6 October, Vic
www.uppermurraychallenge.com.au

Brisbane Valley 100 Race C
7–8 October, Qld
www.qld.canoe.org.au

Australasian Masters Games C
11–12 October, SA
www.sa.canoe.org.au

Trailblazer Challenge BR
20–21 October, SA
www.trailblazer.org.au

State Championships 24 hr R
20–21 October, NSW
www.nswregaining.org

Hawkesbury Canoe Classic C
27–28 October, NSW
www.nsw.canoe.org.au

State Championships 24 hr R
27–28 October, Vic
<http://vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Metrogaine 6 hr R

28 October, Qld
www.qldrogaine.asn.au

November

Spring 6/12 hr R
3 November, ACT
<http://act.rogaine.asn.au>

Bright Alpine Four Peaks BR
3–6 November, Vic
www.brightvic.com/alpineclimb

Kathmandu Sprint Series M
18 November, Vic
www.maxadventure.com.au

State Championships 8/24 hr R
24–25 November, Tas
www.rt.asn.au

Paddy Pallin Night Adventure Race M
30 November, ACT
www.arocsport.com

December

Tasmanian Wildwater Championships C
8 December, Tas
www.tas.canoe.org.au

AROC Adventure Race M
15 December, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

January 2008

50 Hour AR Expedition M
24 January, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

February

Cradle Mountain Run B BR
2 February, Tas
www.cradle.ultraoz.com

AROC Adventure Race M
9 February, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

AROC Adventure Race M
23 February, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

March

Six Foot Track Marathon BR
8 March, NSW
www.sixfoot.com/index.php

April

Lifestart: Oars for a Cause C
13 April, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

Paddy Pallin Adventure Race M
19 April, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

May

The North Face 100 BR
10 May, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

Activities: B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multisports, R regaining. **Regaining events** are organised by the State regaining associations. **Canoeing events** are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.

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Away with the BIRDS

Quentin Chester finds company in his feathered friends throughout the country

March—Kangaroo Island, South Australia

I am walking with Alasdair McGregor to the island's west coast. We leave Snake Lagoon after lunch under the sugar gums, and go down through mallee scrub to Rocky River. Time is short but we can't help ourselves. We dawdle for photos and pointless banter. Ours is a friendship complete with old jokes and slack habits. The light is sharp and burning but a southerly cools us with ocean air. We scuttle across rock ribs, past pools of ink-black water to the dunes and tussocks.

The bush above the shoreline is silent, muffled by the surf's thump and thrash. No sign of life until, right on cue, a solitary pacific gull appears, perched like a figurine on a granite bluff at the end of the beach. We should have known. For years these gulls have played cameos in our travels by the sea. One was there to greet us when we landed on the west coast of Three Hummock Island off Tassie. It was a blasting gale and as we floundered to shore with bags and packs a lone gull watched us. Alasdair put this sentry in a painting. Now it looks like a frontispiece to a friendship.

March—Pahran, Victoria

It takes just a morning in town to ruffle my feathers. Shambling through the noise and crowds of Chapel Street puts me in a daze. No desert ever seemed as alien as this. For years I've tried to like the inner city but it spooks my inner self. Too much time in the bush I suppose. If there were a condition called metrophobia, I'd be a case study. Time to retreat to my sister's tiny back garden, an ivy-walled cubicle in Pahrnan. It's surprisingly serene. I try to read but a grey fantail flits on the edge of my vision like a prison-cell companion teasing me to lighten up. These jaunty characters can't help themselves. So I become an honorary jailbird.

April—Dangar Island, New South Wales

No place does a grey day quite like the Hawkesbury River. I've got two hours on the island where my family and I spent six years. It's a cloudy Monday afternoon, the general shop is shut and there's no one in sight. Under a slate-coloured sky, without a breath of wind, the river has a sheen like wet tar.

On top of the island the bush is unchanged. Blackbutts and angophoras still crowd the sandstone slabs. I used to bring my baby daughters up here, riding on my back in a papoose carrier.

They would coo like monkeys as I tilted the carrier so their faces pressed close to old banksia cones and the flower stalks of grass trees.

For a while the bush remains just rocks and trees. Then, out of nowhere comes the cry of a currawong, as piercing as a car alarm. Now that's more like it, that's how I remember this place: scrappy scrub patrolled by black bandits with wings, hooning and hollering through the branches. Then I remember the other noises too: the putter of the ferry, tinnies clanging at the wharf and still summer nights with the crazed wailing of mating koels. In my memory the place echoes like a jungle.

June—Lamington National Park, Queensland

I walk alone through the forest into Toolona Gorge. For a few minutes the morning sun splits the mist, every leaf surface glistens and the acid green of the moss and lichen seem phosphorescent. Then the roof of cloud closes over and rain trickles through the canopy. In the dimming light the trees appear larger than life. Without a sun or horizon, all sense of time and direction is lost. The forest of giants bears down.

Two hours in and I'm drenched. The track is a mush of leaves and mud. In the steady patter of rain I keep my head down. The only view of the gorge is through a window made by the hood on my rain jacket. Walking like this is not so much a mode of transport as a detached reality, a trance state in which you catch yourself fussing over the texture of bark or the curl of a single leaf.

However, in the midst of it all, I'm never really alone. Eastern yellow robins fix me with inquisitive, sideways glances as they dart between trees, perch on an angle and tilt their small, grey heads. Pairs of log-runners scuttle across the forest floor, tossing leaves and splaying their wonderful barred wings. And through the tapping rain, scrub wrens and thornbills prattle away, full of themselves and full of their world.

July—Coongie Lakes, SA

Paddling the north-west branch of Cooper Creek just before it spills into the lakes. River gums line the banks and it seems as though every third tree has a jumble of sticks forming a whistling kite's nest. Their tooting cries ring through trees, mingling with calls from kites all around the lake. The place is surrounded by desert yet there must be hundreds of sleek raptors in residence. Which means one thing: abundant food.

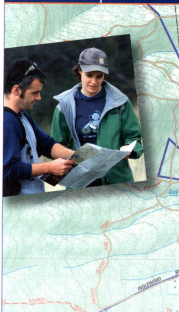
Later, from the bank we watch one of them fishing, swooping in low over the coffee-coloured water, bringing its talons down at the last moment. On the third pass it snatches a fish and wheels upwards to a nest. Everything is going to plan until a master scavenger—a raven—spears in from a nearby tree and rips the fish out of the nest, right from under the kite's beak. It's like a scene from a cartoon as both birds tumble to the ground wrestling with the fish. In the end the raven wins, as they invariably do. The kite flaps back up to the nest and sits there. I want to tell him: 'Mate, look, I know how it feels.'

Frontispiece to a friendship: a pacific gull.
Alasdair McGregor



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August—Adelaide Hills, SA

I've come to believe that home is where the birds are. For this I can thank a black-faced cuckoo shrike who adopted us a few years ago. All summer this natty bird flew orbits over our house, looping around the garden and chirring to all and sundry. He would land in the tree outside our bedroom and compulsively fluff his feathers. We called him Shufflewing.

shaded by stately, smooth-barked apples. But move closer and the pale yellow rock of the overhang at the outcrop's base comes into view. On the smooth, vertical faces are stencilled limbs, hand prints and a full-size human figure in red ochre.

This place is known as The Tombs. Here bodies of the Bidjara people were wrapped in cylinders of bark from the budgeroo tree and

circumstances it does feel like work, but of course nobody would ever believe that.

I start cramming my sleeping bag into its stuff sack when a stabbing pain shoots into the middle finger of my right hand. I give an almighty yelp and go into an involuntary jig, shaking my hand as if wildly strumming a guitar. I jiggle the stuff sack and out falls a scorpion no longer than a match.

Even with the noise of the forest and the crashing waterfall my cry draws the attention of a family camped 200 metres away. I am still dancing on the spot when they appear, offering to help. 'I'm fine—just a little bite', I say with a tense smile. Having already attracted their concern by turning up the previous evening alone and bedraggled, they stand at a safe distance and regard me with a look of deep scepticism. 'It's okay, really', I say, trying to sound calm. 'I'm sure it will pass'.

The pain in my finger did go away but there were other mishaps to come and by the end I was sunburnt and covered in gashes and insect bites. But Hinchinbrook is an astonishing place



Whistling kite nests at Coongie Lakes. *Quentin Chester*

There is that breed of person who lives to spot birds. They take notes, record calls and keep lists. One by one species are ticked off and elaborate journeys are made for rare sightings. I'm too undisciplined a traveller for all that but over the years birds have wheeled their way into my thinking. And it was Shufflewing who taught me to listen. Now I can't help myself.

Living on the edge of the bush, the birds are always with us, chortling away, lighting on to bushes at our feet and sticking their beaks into flowers and fruit. We have tribes of wrens, honeyeaters and thornbills claiming ownership of the garden. I wake to rosellas, lorikeets, screeching galahs and squabbling blackbirds. The mere glimpse of yellow-tailed cockatoos lumbering through the air still stops me in my tracks.

Little by little I've surrendered to various demands. Bird baths have been installed, a feeder is hung in the apple tree for the red-browed finches and flowery shrubs have been planted to appease the eastern spinebills. In return, our many tenants strut their stuff, sing their hearts out and show what it means to get on with life.

September—Mt Moffat, Queensland

From a distance it's just another sandstone outcrop. The main face has weathered into a rounded, bulging wall, charcoal grey and tufted with vegetation. It's set in gentle grassland

carefully placed in round hollows eroded deep into the rock by the elements. The lower wall of the outcrop is honeycombed with dozens of these small tunnels. By 1902 they were empty, every burial cylinder was gone—stolen.

Visit enough of these sites and the feeling of the place takes you over. As usual I find it hard to leave. In the early evening light the main overhang seems to glow, while slanting shadows highlight the dips and hollows on the walls nearby. For a few moments I try to take a photograph but then a cackling mob of apostle birds appears, hopping and hustling along the track. They gabble amongst themselves, carrying on as though they own the place. It feels like I'm being told.

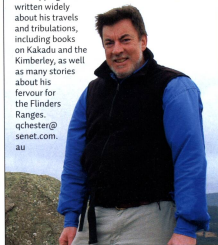
They say travel broadens the mind. But keep on travelling and pretty soon you have all breadth and no depth. Incidents pile up with fleeting scenes and fragments of places. There's no way to absorb it all. You look for a way in—or a way out. As the years go by I find myself following the birds. They tell you a lot about where you are, and even when to shove off.

September—Hinchinbrook Island, Queensland

Packing up camp in dripping rainforest at Mulligan Falls, the dregs of a storm that dumped record rain still hanging over the island. The air is soupy with moisture and mosses are fizzing around my ears. It's the start of five days on the island for a story I have to write. Under the

Quentin Chester

After 30 years of walking and climbing, Quentin is still tapping into the call of the wild. He has written widely about his travels and tribulations, including books on Kakadu and the Kimberley, as well as many stories about his fervour for the Flinders Ranges. qchester@senet.com.au



and stumbling through the damp forest that first morning the voice I heard was the insistent cry of noisy pittas saying 'walk-to-work', 'walk-to-work'.

October—Byron Bay, NSW

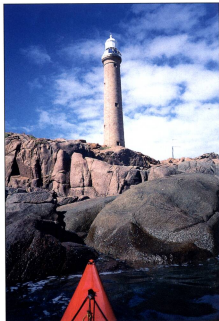
In bird terms my spouse and I are mostly sedentary although seasonally nomadic. But flitting about the fleshpots of Byron we are way out of our normal range. Big haciendas and flash resorts, arty boutiques and the motley surfing crowd are not familiar habitat. When the confusion gets too much we skulk to the beach or, better still, cruise into the rainforest. There we are happy to be vagrants, listening to the chatter and musical trills from the trees. Alas, one resident, the male whipbird, makes a hash of it with his raucous, whip-cracking shout. Still, I can relate to that. And as old Henry Van Dyke said: 'Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best.' 🐦

Quentin Chester



Dreamtime Paddles **South-east Coast**

A trip from Jervis Bay across the border to Victoria's Mallacoota gave John Wilde two weeks to discover local beauty, dreams and realities. Here are his impressions of 'the sea kayakers' equivalent to the Australian Alps Walking Track'



AS OUR RIVERS SLOWLY DRY UP, MY WHITE-water ambitions have been frustrated and I have found myself turning more and more to the wide blue yonder of sea kayaking. In particular, the expedition-style paddle has filled the adventure vacuum admirably: a trip across Bass Strait or a couple of weeks off the north Queensland coast will keep the most ardent outdoors fan happy!

I have always regarded the Victorian and New South Wales coast as something of a training ground; great scenery and beautiful places for a weekend or so while you keep your fitness and skills up, but missing that 'expedition' quality.

Left, sunset from Petrel Point, Croajingolong National Park, on the last night of the trip. The finish point of Point Hicks is on the horizon. **Above**, Gabo Island Lighthouse. All photos by the author

ling on the of Australia

That was until early 2007 when a couple of us, not wanting to do the long, hot trip to Tassie, decided to link up many of our favourite play spots on an extended exploration of our local coast. The Booderee (Jervis Bay, NSW) to Croajingolong (Victoria) kayaking concept suddenly stared us in the face—we couldn't believe that we had left this excellent trip for so long.

The paddle could be described as the sea kayakers' equivalent to the Australian Alps Walking Track as there are a number of similarities, not least that the trip starts in the Australian Capital Territory (care of the ACT's sea base around Jervis Bay), traverses a long stretch of the NSW coastline and eventually enters Victoria. Secondly, the route takes you past no less than ten national parks on the coast, as well as numerous small island parks (some with restricted landings) and the spectacular, rugged coastline and golden beaches of the Nadgee Wilderness Area (where permits are required). Finally, the route is a committing venture that would normally take at least two weeks. It could easily take more than a month, especially if the trip was

wonderful store of stories from New Guinea to the Antarctic, including a wrestle with crocodiles.

Just before we headed off around the spectacular Crocodile Head and Point Perpendicular, a couple of fishermen wandered over to inspect our boats; as usual, they were worried about their frail appearance. As we explained the skills necessary for such a venture—rolling, bracing and rescue drills—and listed the flares, EPIRB, marine radios, charts and a GPS we carried as safety equipment, they developed a new level of respect for our venture. Finally, they wished us well like old friends.

A big south-westerly change had come through the previous day, delaying our departure. We still had a ten knot headwind, but we were confident that we could at least reach the sheltered waters of Jervis Bay. With a lot of clapotis (rebound from swells hitting the cliffs) and huge sheets of white water from the swells crashing against the massive rock ramparts, our first day was an impressive beginning.

This section of coastline has some huge sea caves and there is a massive sea arch off Croco-

line—a moment later I pulled in a nice, fat Australian salmon. Ten minutes later we landed at an isolated beach and cut up the fish, eating it raw with soy sauce and wasabi. We figured this was just what was needed to re-energise and rebuild our tired muscles for the 500 kilometres yet to come.

Later, we sat around the stove with full bellies, relaxed and ready for a long night's sleep on our air mattresses. We watched the sun set over the superb Summer Cloud Bay and felt like millionaires.

The following day dawned cloudless and still, so we decided to cut across the bay towards Sussex Inlet, a quiet hamlet at the entrance to St Georges Basin. The lofty peak of Pigeon House kept us company on the horizon and by late morning we had exactly what we wanted: a pleasant breeze of about 15 knots from the north, which allowed us to rig our sails and make good time.

Bendalong Bay is well known for its stingrays. Although best viewed from a distance, these majestic creatures draw a lot of interest. Although



extended at either end—why not Sydney to Wilsons Prom, or be a devil and aim for Hobart!

Of course, many coastal towns break up the trip's wilderness, but this can be useful for getting supplies and could be a distinct advantage in an emergency or bad weather. Every night we were able to camp on remote beaches, usually with superb views and as far away from the rush of modern life as you could wish. We were also privileged to camp at some quite isolated spots—each a bushwalker's paradise—in the Murramarang, Nadgee and Croajingolong areas.

There was very little fuss or organisation required: Mike Snoad and I made some quick phone calls and spent a couple of days getting organised. Before we knew it we were on the water at Currarong for a two to three week adventure right on our doorstep.

Mike is an excellent paddling partner; he's been a sailor for most of his life and has an intimate knowledge of the sea. He is quite happy tackling the Bass Strait in his kayak, solo, and has a

dile Head itself—when conditions permit, it is a wonderful area to explore. However, in the current conditions it was hard enough to take a hand off the paddle for a quick photograph, so we kept our distance. Paddling well out to sea, a dark fin slicing through the water gave me a sudden fright. This soon turned to delight as a pod of three dolphins, my special talisman, stopped for a moment to give approval to our project before shooting off in search of more fun.

Coming into the calm of Jervis Bay, we suddenly remembered that it was lunchtime. Not wishing to break our trip on a crowded beach, we opted to land on the low tideline at Bowen Island, a national park and bird reserve, where we could wade around in the shallow water and revitalise our tired limbs before continuing around St Georges Head.

By the time we entered Summer Cloud Bay we had paddled 35 kilometres against the headwind and were both feeling the effects of the day. Luckily, I still had the energy to rig my trolling

we looked, we did not see a single one: the tourist traffic must have spooked them. We then hugged the coast to Ulladulla, where we had an appointment with Simeon Michaels. He was paddling from Sydney to Hobart to raise awareness about the Tamar Valley's plight if the proposed Gunns pulp mill goes ahead. This lively character is full of enthusiasm for the environment and we agreed to paddle with him for a few days when he reached Batemans Bay.

Mike and I continued down the coast to another isolated beach, from where we had great views back up the coast over our day's route. We'd covered about 40 kilometres with much less effort than the previous day.

The next section of coastline is a hidden jewel, with rugged outcrops of rock interspersed with long beaches and half-hidden, sheltered coves. This was good for us as the wind kept building—by the time we reached Bawley Point it was gusting up to 20 knots and there was real excitement as we surged down long, green rollers.

At times we caught up to the wave in front and the whole front of the boat would start to bury, a wave crest maybe breaking around our chest or neck as the kayaks rocketed along.

At Pebbly Beach we took a well-deserved rest, warming up in the sun while we talked to other campers, before we rugged up for another push on the wild ocean. Most of this area is part of

Aborigines who named the area. The literal translation of the point's name is 'sustenance for the stomach': this obviously referred to the big taylor I had caught off Congo and cooked in Thai curry sauce with angel-hair noodles. Such are the joys of sea kayaking!

There is a particularly strong Aboriginal presence here, with middens and artefacts as markers.

The next day's forecast sounded interesting—although in our favour—30 knots from the north during the afternoon. We opted for an early start, before conditions got too rough, and were soon speeding down the coast. We had a quick lunch at Hidden Valley, timing our landing carefully as the surf was starting to build and the sets were rolling in. Then another mad ride past



An interesting landing at Burrewarra Point, Broulee. Left, this is the life...Mike Snoad under sail.

Murramarang National Park and the spotted-gum forests are particularly impressive. We finished the day at Myrtle Beach, a lovely spot with a flat, grassy bank overlooking a rugged beach surrounded by seaweed-covered reefs.

At Batemans Bay the marine forecast for the next day was terrible—a strong southerly of up to 30 knots. It wasn't the weather for going anywhere in sea kayaks, especially into the wind, so we decided to have a casual day and finish our car shuttle. We also caught up with Ken Motley—he doesn't have a lot of sea kayaking experience, but his skills from years of bushwalking and white-water work made him a good companion for the rest of the trip.

We finally left Batemans Bay as a company of four, Simeon and I chatting about a huge range of life and environmental issues. The sea was almost flat, allowing us to inspect some of the rocky chasms and gauntlets close to the Congo area, with resulting adrenalin rushes when we teased the waves by going through one more narrow gap.

We finished the day on the long curve of the bay at Bingi Bingi Point. There was another glorious sunset and we felt in tune with the

From the point, the 'Bingi Dreaming' track follows beaches and headlands for eight kilometres back to Congo and is highly recommended. This walk allows you to consider how short a time Europeans have been in the area and the huge effects of their presence on such a fragile environment.

There are rugged granite outcrops all along the coast of this area, with perhaps the most impressive being Montague Island. It has a history of shipwrecks and a solid-looking lighthouse, and is a great place to explore by sea kayak. Landing is not normally permitted above the tideline as it is a sanctuary for penguins, seals and other fauna and flora. Nevertheless, a sea exploration of this area is highly recommended and if you are lucky you will be entertained by seals, dolphins and penguins. While we were out there Simeon annoyed me by spending much of his time on his mobile phone; when he announced that he had, just possibly, organised a Midnight Oil benefit concert for his arrival in Hobart I had to forgive him. Well done, Sim!

By this time the wind had come up again, providing some exciting sailing—Mike clocked himself at 19.4 kilometres an hour as we flew along. We pulled into Mystery Bay, another lovely spot, with a campsite amongst the spotted gum on the headland overlooking the cliffs below.

The literal translation of the point's name is 'sustenance for the stomach': this obviously referred to the big taylor I had caught off Congo and cooked in Thai curry sauce with angel-hair noodles. Such are the joys of sea kayaking!

Bunga Head and the coloured sandstone of Mimosa Rocks National Park. Unfortunately, conditions were too rough to land at Annagannu or Bithri Inlet. I made life hard for myself by trawling a line, finally landing a couple of fat salmon despite the conditions.

Our maps indicated that Nelsons Lagoon should be protected from the wind and I had fond memories of this sheltered and quiet spot. Simeon had a press conference organised for Tathra Beach, so we went our separate ways. We headed for the solitude of the wilderness environment we had come to explore, wishing Simeon all the best for his Bass Strait crossing. Mike took a dip in the entrance surf on the bar, our first roll for the trip, before we entered the millpond of the lagoon itself. It provided wonderful shelter from the wind; unfortunately, the sandflies were exploiting this as well, leading to an early night in the tents.

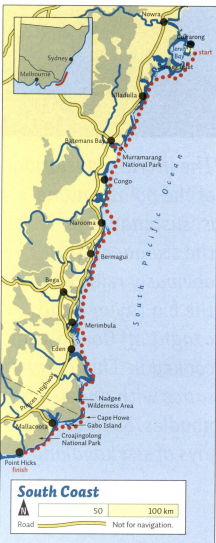
The forecast for the following day again contained a strong-wind warning from the north and we waited with eager anticipation, but this time we didn't have an easy ride. We slogged down the coast, covering 60 kilometres past Bournda and into Merrimula to pick up fresh water, feeling very conspicuous and ill at ease in the summer crowds. We then crossed Two Fold Bay to Morray Point, where we had arranged to meet two friends on their way back from Tassie.

By the time we arrived in the surf at Morray Point, we were so tired that I got caught

sideways in the slops on the beach after having taken my spray-deck off between waves. I ended up on the water's edge with a boat full of water, making it very difficult to manoeuvre. Mike was just behind me on an oncoming wave and crashed into the stern of my boat—we looked like a pair of novices! Fortunately, there was little damage apart from a chip out of Mike's

the sea eagle and the rock orchid. Paddling up the lagoon, the water is a constant disturbance of fish—an alert eye will spot the brilliant turquoise flashes as the kingfisher darts to take its prey. If you land here, please pay special respect to the area, it is an environmental wonderland.

Offshore and on, young muttonbirds (sooty shearwaters) kept us amused with their flying



wooden boat, and we were able to stretch our cramped limbs.

We spent the evening chatting with Dee Ratcliffe and Harry Huva, who had walked into the site on the way back from a Tassie trip. Harry had just completed a solo crossing of western Bass Strait via King Island; he'd had several legs of up to 80 kilometres and taken 14 hours to complete the final 100 kilometre crossing to Victoria's Apollo Bay.

As we chatted, our thoughts were with our friend Andrew McAuley. He was on his way to New Zealand attempting the first ever kayak crossing of the Tasman Sea—at that stage he was a daunting 400 kilometres out, with 1200 kilometres still to go. On the evening of 9 February 2007, the New Zealand Coastguard received an almost indecipherable message on their emergency channel from 60 kilometres off the New Zealand coast. This proved to be the last message from Andrew, who disappeared without a trace, though his upturned kayak was later recovered. It is an incredible tribute to Andrew's stamina, preparation, and commitment that he had covered more than 1500 kilometres in 22 days despite some massive storms, and was within sight of the New Zealand coast. May his adventurous spirit live on.

The next section of coast is the trip's most committing, with few landing sites if the surf is big and many major cliff faces as you approach Bass Strait. Consequently, when we woke up to thick sea fog we were a little worried, but an early start and a break at the sheltered Bitangabee Bay beach set us up well. We were soon out on a smooth sea past Green Cape and crossing Disaster Bay to my favourite spot on the coast, Merrica River.

Here, at the beginning of the Nadgee Wilderness Area, is a special spot indeed, the haunt of

Seals inspect the paddlers 'like a group of anxious Labrador pups' at the Skerries, Wigan Inlet, Croajingolong National Park. **Above right**, Mike at Curraong, the trip's start, embracing the challenge of loading two weeks' supplies into his sea kayak. **Below right**, Gordon Carswell at Merrica River, Nadgee Wilderness Area.

skills, sweeping silently and swiftly over the waves. They only had a few short weeks before starting their 13 000 kilometre journey to the summer feeding grounds off Japan. Hunting penguins called and a sea eagle hovered overhead. We traversed past the rocky cliffs, folded as if by some age-old potter who had kneaded the clay into the most amazing folds, joints and fissures, then mixed it with earthy ochres and pastels, before throwing it into some vast kiln.

We eventually reached Nadgee River, a sheltered spot once you reach the land. However, the beach is often engulfed by a rolling surf which can take its toll. As we approached, I spied a big set on the horizon and paddled like a mad thing to reach the calm water. Mike was not so lucky and was enveloped in a wall of white water, taking his third roll of the trip. We had a calm night with only the mosquitoes disturbing the atmosphere.

I had chosen Tim Flannery's *The Weather Makers* as reading material for the trip. It was the perfect time for contemplating the book's messages and what we will say to our great-grandchildren if we do not mend our ways and pay attention to what is happening to the environment. I cannot recommend the book highly enough.

In the morning Mike and Ken volunteered me to be 'beach master'—my duty was to get everyone off the beach safely before exiting myself. I gave Ken a final push through the shore dump just as a set developed, but Ken showed

his metal by punching through. Shortly afterwards a big set came in over the back again and he got airborne as he made his final break from the surf, more than adequately proving his skills. Mike got out with little difficulty and, to my relief, I hardly got wet except from the shore dump.

A strong nor'wester was blowing and Mike and I promptly hoisted our sails for another mad

under our sails thanks to the howling 25–30 knot wind. A pod of dolphins sat off my bow, eyeballing me as we surfed along together in a mass of foam and rollers.

Racing up to Gabo Island Lighthouse, I decided to run the gauntlet, the gap between the coast or island and outlying rocks. Due to swell and rebound, this often entails negotiating a

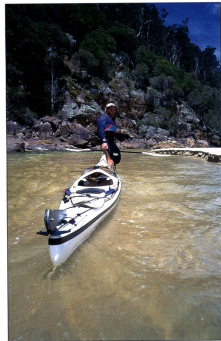
more days of fair weather before a strong southerly change so time was of the essence. As we left the island, waving goodbye to Peter, and to Sandy who was continuing her voyage, we decided on a bold plan. We would go for it along the Croajingolong coast, passing Mallacoota in a mad dash to get as far as we could before the weather changed.

The Croajingolong coast is very different from neighbouring Nadgee. It mainly consists of long beaches with occasional rocky headlands, and landings can be severely limited by big surf. Despite this, we had few problems, despite Ken cracking his new boat's bulkhead on a dumping beach.

We visited the Skerries, a group of rocky outcrops off Wigan Inlet that houses one of the biggest remaining seal colonies in Australia. The seals seemed totally unconcerned by our presence in the calm conditions: one knocked me over as it came off a nearby rock, landing on my shoulder! This drove my boat up on weed-covered rocks and I had to climb out and relaunch—even this seemed to cause little excitement to the nearby seals. Photographs taken, we continued to Petrel Point, which has a lovely sheltered bay on its western edge.

We'd paddled for 65 kilometres and decided to call it quits for the day. Between the March flies, B52 black flies and mosquitoes I do not know how the bushwalkers survive—perhaps it is a Victorian skill! The beam of Point Hicks Lighthouse illuminated our campsite and again we slept well.

For our final day we set our sights on Cape Everard. Cape Conran, at the end of Croajingolong National Park, could have been our goal if



rush, agreeing to meet Ken (who didn't have a sail) off Cape Howe at the Victorian border. The wait was exciting in the cold, buffeting winds, looking over the stark, dark coastline.

As we entered Victorian waters we were greeted by a group of seals, inspecting us like a group of anxious Labrador pups and waving their flippers—if I could have taken my hand off my paddle without capsizing I would have waved back. Cape Howe is the beginning of a completely different coastal environment, the folded cliffs of Nadgee giving way to the long, rolling beaches of Croajingolong National Park. Then our run to Gabo Island began, flying along

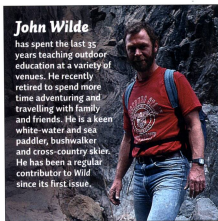
heaving mass of foam and waves, which requires good timing and a steady heart. I finally sailed under the rocky point into the shelter of the island. It was a spectacular and adrenalin-filled final run through a welter of green spray and white foam. It took 50 minutes to cover the 12 kilometre stretch; even Ken, paddling like a Trojan, managed it in less than an hour.

In the calm of the Gabo jetty we caught up with our friend Peter Provis. He was caretaking the island and had arranged accommodation for us in the keeper's cottage. Binoculars in hand, he was keeping an eye open for Sandy Robson, who had left Mallacoota earlier that day and was struggling to make headway against the strong winds. This plucky woman has taken a year off to pursue her dream of paddling as far as she can around the Australian coast in 12 months. Sandy's Long Australian Paddle (SLAP) had been slowed down considerably by big surf, boat damage and contrary winds on her trip from Queenscliff, outside Port Phillip Bay.

In my previous life—working as an outdoors education teacher before retirement—I had met Sandy at several conferences and we had several mutual friends, so I was also relieved when she turned up just after lunch, tired but happy to have reached the island. Peter made us a huge pasta meal that night, complete with freshly baked garlic bread, and we digested some much-needed carbohydrates.

At dawn I crept out to do some yoga on the verandah. From there, I looked out over the pink granite bulk of the lighthouse, the second highest in Australia. What a way to greet the sunrise.

Our plans for the next couple of days were up for discussion, as we had cars at Mallacoota and could do another shuttle further down the coast. However, the forecast only gave us two



John Wilde

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all had stayed well, but this was not to be. Early in the morning, a strong southerly change caught us just short of Point Hicks Lighthouse. A final crawl to a small beach at the foot of Point Hicks gave us a chance to reflect and enjoy the moment.

Although we knew that we could do the final 50 kilometre slog to Cape Conran into the wind, our aim was to appreciate the area, not to overcome it. With discretion being the better part of valour, we retreated to the campsite at Thurra River. A kind family there offered to lend us their car for the shuttle to Mallacoota, a lovely gesture that reminded us of the strength of human kindness. As we had a quiet glass of wine with them that evening, our cars packed and the trip at an end, all we had left was our memories and dreams. What a magic trip. 📸



THE **Crown** OF THE **Flinders Ranges**

A ring of peaks that defines the South Australian range, Wilpena Pound is outback royalty. But is it best explored from inside or out? Using the Heysen Trail for access, *Andrew Bain* finds out



TO BORROW THE OVERHEARD WORDS OF A TOUR GUIDE AT WILPENA POUND, the Flinders Ranges are South Australia's 'bushwalking Mecca'. For most visitors, the pilgrimage begins and ends at Wilpena Pound, the ring of peaks that all but defines the Flinders. Fittingly shaped like a crown, the Pound is a piece of outback royalty, but what I've often wondered is whether it's a place best experienced from the inside or out. Undecided, I recently set out to do both.

To do this I planned to approach Wilpena from the north, walking overland for three days from Parachilna Gorge—much of it in view of the Pound's most impressive wall—before wandering through the Pound itself. My guiding line would be the Heysen Trail, the epic track that runs from Parachilna Gorge to Cape Jervis, covering some 1200 kilometres. I would walk just 60 kilometres of the Heysen, although arguably it is the finest 60 kilometres of all.

In Parachilna Gorge, I set out amongst emus and oleander bushes, their hot-pink flowers looking incongruous in the dry landscape. The creek-bed was soft and silty underfoot, and the beautiful, nondescript land was dotted with porcupine grass. A rain shower scudded through, and I wondered whether this was to be the arid outback I thought I'd signed on for.

For the entire day I would simply be in or beside creek-beds, never straying from between the Heysen and ABC Ranges. The track would twice cross into new valleys, but each one continued south, as if these ancient waterways were too old to be bothered meandering.

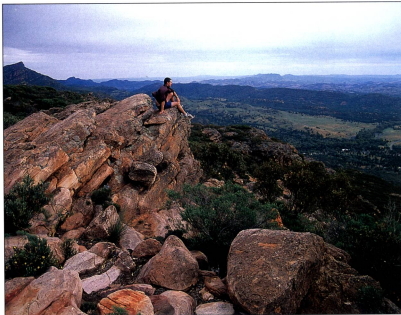
The day remained overcast and flies followed me like a permanent rain cloud, forming a layer of buzzing mist below a higher layer of true cloud. The cloud seemed only to pack the heat lower, and as I walked along the dry creek-beds I produced my own waterways of sweat. Goats bleated from a hillside and ringneck parrots glided by like missiles.

Head down, I slipped comfortably into my walking groove, one that landed me a metre from a black snake sprawled across the creek-bed. Moments

later I was being hissed at by a shingleback lizard, a creature that looks like an elongated pine cone. It was a clear message that I should watch my step a little more carefully.

After an hour the track rounded a spur and dropped into the evocatively named Wild Dog Valley, though it felt like anything but a change of valleys: different creek, same scene. On the plain beside the creek, native trees were interspersed with pests: prickly pears with cypress pines; olives with wattles. Briefly, the Heysen Range adopted the appearance of the tropics, with the red rock of Mt Bell's escarpment cut by lush, green gorges. It felt more like a scene from the Northern Territory's Victoria River than the Flinders Ranges, and it had the humidity to match.

Soon I was walking in rain. This was certainly not the outback I expected but the surprise was very welcome, the water freshening both my body and the land. Lizards sheltered beneath shrubs and the dry creek began a tiny flow. With just a few minutes of heavy rain the earth seemed



transformed, the hills glistening and the birds singing with renewed voice. But as the rain cleared, so did the clouds, leaving me steaming like a sauna.

Wild Dog Valley climbed imperceptibly, rising to a saddle below two mountains named like cartoon characters: Dib and Dab. A short distance on, the water from the Pigeon Bore windmill tasted like blood. From here, the rest of my day was descent, dipping into the Aroona valley as gradually as the previous climb. Part-way down the slope I was treated to my first glimpse of Wilpena Pound, a shadowed beacon that seemed impossibly far away.

At the end of the descent, the land opened out into paddocks tinted purple with Salvation Jane, aka Paterson's curse, a beautiful weed that's more curse than salvation. I'd arrived at Aroona, my first night's stop and a place central to the cultural history of both the Flinders Ranges and the Heysen Trail.

The site of one of three permanent springs found in the Flinders Ranges in 1850 (Wilpena was another), the Aroona homestead was built for Frederick Hayward, the first pastoralist in

A bushwalker admires the view from the summit of Mt Ohlssen Bagge. Top left, Wilpena Pound forms the backdrop as a walker follows the Heysen Trail towards Yanyanna Hut.

All photos by the author

the area. The station prospered for a decade but then declined; today all that remains of the original homestead are the foundations.

A few steps away is the pug-and-pine Aroona Hut, and it was here that Hans Heyesen began his enduring love affair with the Flinders Ranges. The artist first visited Aroona Hut in 1926 and returned many times, painting a number of works

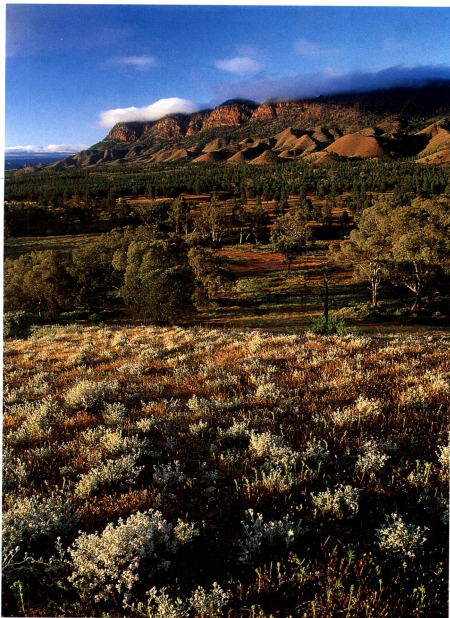
it now cuts away to the south. Out of interest I detoured out on to Red Hill, surprising a trio of emus in a creek-bed. They dashed away, looking for all the world like bad haircuts. I found them halfway up the hill, and they sprinted off again. And so we proceeded up Red Hill, from where I admired the views and the emus admired the patchy covering of grass.

this was right. Within the hour I was walking in full sun and a heat I could not begrudge. As if in reaction to the change of weather, the wooded land turned suddenly to scrub and the ground became an almost lifeless sheet of rock. But I had also joined Brachina Creek, here in its infancy, draining south towards one of the Flinders's most celebrated moments in geology, Brachina Gorge.

On the banks of Brachina Creek the land was as dry and sunbaked as a farmer's arms, and the tree cover was limited to an occasional pine and a smattering of prickly acacia. But always ahead were the beckoning walls of the Pound.

The track turned with the creek towards the gorge, but only momentarily. By the Trezona camping ground the relationship ended, the track diverging from the creek. On its bank I sat out the heat of the day beneath a river red gum before striding out again towards the Flinders's next great gorge-carving creek, Bunyeroo.

For a time beyond Trezona it seemed as if there were more track markers than trees though soon the track returned to a creek and the surety of the Flinders's trademark, river red gums.



Looking past the wildflowers to the walls of Mt Hayward from the Aroona valley.

here. In 1971 the mountains to the west—the Heyesen Range—were named in his honour. During the following two decades, the Heyesen Trail was created.

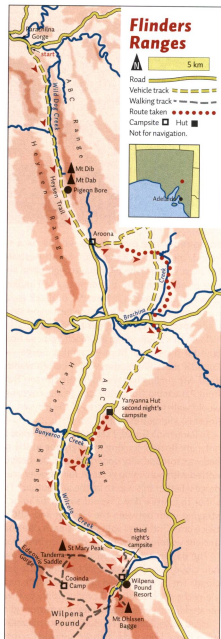
The next morning I was greeted by a golden dawn, bronzing the Heyesen Range even as cloud still clung to its tops like a cloth. Though I had a lengthy day ahead, I stayed longer than I intended, simply watching the play of light. It was a beautiful sight that I savoured, for thicker cloud was marching in once again.

The climb out from the Aroona camping ground traversed the ABC Range (was it named by a four-year-old?) between fractured rock heavily plastered in lichen. Across the range, the Heyesen Trail used to swing over Red Hill though

To the south, the tips of Wilpena's crown were severed by cloud.

Back at the track junction, the Heyesen Trail began a slow climb on to the Brachina Formation, a set of gentle hills that somehow ended up being set between rugged ranges. Topping out at Brachina Lookout, the view was like a repetition of Red Hill, except that from here I could trace the Heyesen's path all the way to the Pound, where the cloud now appeared to be lifting. Tanderra Saddle—where I would enter the Pound two days from now—drooped out of the cloud, and St Mary Peak also popped out of the fug.

Ever the optimist, I took this as a sign of improving weather. Unlike most of my forecasts,



Past a spring at Middlesight Water Hut, the country ahead was as harsh as it was hot, though it wasn't without relief. Rainbow bee-eaters glided overhead. A pair of wedge-tailed eagles circled as though in a holding pattern. And as I watched a flock of grass parrots in a eucalypt, I almost stepped on another shingle-back lizard. Then another, and several more as the afternoon drew on. The track, it seemed, was all but paved in shinglebacks.

After a long and hot day of walking, I finally made camp beside Yanyanna Hut, once the site of changing yards used by mail coaches between Adelaide and Blinman. The next morning I was away before the sun, into a day that promised so much. It began with an immediate climb on to the rocky bars of a hill above the hut. I

Rounding the hilltops of the ABC Range, the track found its way out through a gorge coloured with black and red rock. It was the sort of place that might be a minor tourist attraction elsewhere, but is unnamed and little visited in the gorge-riddled Flinders. At the gorge's end I was back where I began, pinched between the Heyesen and ABC Ranges, though now I only had to follow the Wilcolo valley and I would be at the entrance to Wilpena Pound.

Along this valley I could chart my walking progress by the now familiar peaks sliding by on my right: Mt Abrupt, St Mary Peak, Mt Boorong. Passing below Tanderra Saddle, as flat as a bookshelf, my eventual path into the Pound was obvious, with the track to the pass grasping its way across the slope. It was little more than two

hours—from here I could almost see three days into the past. The thrill of the climb was muted by the presence of blue reflectors pasted on to the rocks to guide walkers through the final moves on to the saddle. For a moment, it was as though this was a road, not a track.

Atop Tanderra Saddle, the sloped escarpments of St Mary Peak and Mt Boorong loomed large, framing views out to the bumpy skyline of the Pound's southern rim. I'd last visited the Pound 25 years before, as a child; back then my parents had deemed me too young to climb St Mary Peak, the highest mountain along the Pound rim. Today, the local Adnyamathanpa people ask visitors to respect St Mary Peak's sanctity and not climb it.

Leaving the saddle, I stepped into the Pound for the first time and was swallowed by scrub. Lower down, the scrub shrank away, opening out to a view across the entirety of the Pound, revealing its full symmetrical glory. At its western end, Edeowie Gorge, my next destination, drained away into the greater outback.

I dumped my gear at Cooina Camp, the only campsite inside the Pound, and set out on the track to Edeowie, pushing through wildflowers and escorted by hundreds of tiny butterflies. At the track's end I descended into the dry gorge, a place unlike anything else in the Pound, a deep, untidy cut in the land which I shared only with feral goats. Following the creek-bed, I inched down the wall of a waterfall, past river red gums with roots like boa constrictors, to a point where the gorge tumbled away into boulder-strewn chaos.


Back at Cooina Camp, the evening was of the sort that makes the outback so addictive. The day's heat had been chased away and the light was as soft as flowers. In the grassy clearings south of camp—lands cleared by settlers but

now adopted by kangaroos—I could have been in some rural idyll, not an arid mountain range. As I strolled about, soaking in the evening, the kangaroos watched me unconcerned, as though they too felt a little sentimental on such a gorgeous night.

In the morning I walked through the clearings and it was obvious that a harsh new day was beginning. It was like a stone dropped in the ocean, except that the ripples were kangaroos, breaking in every direction.

Past Hill's Homestead I began the walk out of the Pound through Pound Gap, but I had one more diversion in mind: Mt Ohlsen Bagge. Like St Mary Peak, much had changed here in the years since my last visit. Then, Mt Ohlsen Bagge had been known by the more prosaic name Mt

John, and it had been the one peak I was allowed to climb. The track had since been re-routed, making it unrecognisable.

I'd anticipated a wistful return to this mountain, as though I might see everything again through the eyes of a ten-year-old child. But as I weaved through the escarpment and on to the summit I realised there were no memories here, just a biting wind and another jewel in the Wilpena crown. 

The evening was of the sort that makes the outback so addictive. The day's heat had been chased away and the light was as soft as flowers.



The pug-and-pine Arroona Hut, where artist Hans Heyesen began his love affair with the Flinders Ranges.

arrived at its top in time for sunrise, the wall of the Pound ahead glowing as if molten.

Just a few hundred metres from where I stood was the famed Bunyerroo Gorge Road, with its views that grace posters and magazine spreads. Standing higher than the road, I enjoyed the full beauty of the scene across Bunyerroo Valley and Wilpena Pound—and also the pleasure of hard-earned isolation. It was a perfect dawn perfectly spent.

When I finally walked on, kangaroos and rabbits rushed from my path, so many that the earth seemed almost to be moving. The track dipped away into the bed of Bunyerroo Creek, its rock walls closing in to less than a metre apart. If the creek was running I'd have stood no chance of getting through this narrow chasm, but this was the Flinders—Bunyerroo is as dry as this almost every day.

Out of Bunyerroo Creek I returned to the familiarity of open expanses. For a couple of kilometres the track ambled along the edge of the ABC Range, then turned abruptly to cut across it. Atop the range I veered away to Bunyerroo Lookout for yet another view of the Pound, so close now that I could see every wrinkle in St Mary Peak's upturned nose and every groove in the Sawtooth. The opposite direction offered a glimpse into Bunyerroo Gorge and the vast outback beyond.

kilometres from where I stood, yet it remained a day away.

The Heyesen Trail doesn't enter the Pound through Tanderra Saddle, heading instead to the Wilpena Pound Resort and through the Pound Gap, a major opening in the circle of mountains. From here, it makes a hurried crossing through the Pound to Bridle Gap, continuing on its course towards Adelaide.

I stayed with the Heyesen Trail as far as the resort, but my plans called for a greater and more lingering exploration of the Pound. With two more days of walking I could branch out to most of Wilpena's accessible areas.

I began the next morning along the St Mary Peak Outside Track around the outer base of the mountains—after three days I still didn't get to enter the Pound immediately. Kangaroos grazed themselves fat on the grasslands turned green by the recent rain.

Within half an hour the tilted form of St Mary Peak was back in view, though I was impatient now to be inside the Pound, not looking on to it. The climb to Tanderra Saddle, a combination of steep walking and simple scrambling, opened up views back across the lands I'd wandered

Andrew Bain

is a Melbourne writer who spends too much time wandering when he should be working. He is the author of *Headwinds*, a book about a 20,000 kilometre cycling journey around Australia.





THE LOWDOWN ON THE CLIFFTOPS:

Tasman National Park

Peter Franklin gives an overview of the walking in one of Tasmania's most historical national parks, featuring spectacular cliffs, coastal panoramas and prolific plants

FOR MOST VISITORS, THE MAIN ATTRACTIONS of the Tasman Peninsula are the ruins of the penal settlement of Port Arthur and the spectacular blowholes at Eaglehawk Neck. However, walkers from southern Tasmania have been exploring the area for many years. Walking in the region often required local knowledge, but this situation has gradually changed with the production of a guidebook and the impetus following the proclamation of the Tasman National Park in 1999. The park was established for many reasons including the area's historical significance, the striking coastal panoramas, sea-cliffs and other spectacular features of geodiversity, and to protect threatened flora and fauna species. The diversity of plants is such that one-third of Tasmania's species can be found in the park.

Lichen-encrusted dolerite columns contrast with the watery backdrop at Cape Raoul, Tasman National Park. *Rob Blakers*

There seems to be a real intention to promote the region as a bushwalking destination. Tracks are gradually being upgraded, with five included in the 'Tasmanian Great Short Walks' glossy brochure. In May 2007 the Tasmanian Government announced plans to spend about \$15 million on a six-day hut-based walk taking in capes Hauy, Pillar and Raoul. Attracting tourists and providing opportunities for private businesses seem to be the primary motives, with a low priority given to encouraging bushwalking for the health and wellbeing of the state's citizens. Nevertheless, the concept of such a walk has merit.

History

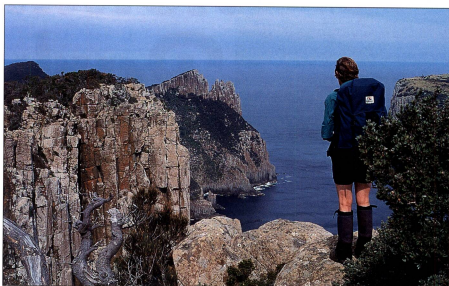
The early white colonisers decided that the Tasman Peninsula was ideal as a penal settlement as all that connected it to the mainland was a narrow strip of land. Reminders of those days abound including sites at Saltwater River and Eaglehawk Neck, with Port Arthur the most famous of these. (The tourist dollar is now big business, so there is an admission charge.) In 1996 Port Arthur received undesirable notoriety when a

known walks on the former. The cliffs and immediate hinterland of these have been reserved, but the voracious appetite of the logging industry meant that many worthy areas were excluded. The result is jarring as clear-fell sites are passed while driving to the track heads of some of the best walks.

Most of the Tasman Peninsula's remaining heathland is within the national park, and some walking tracks pass through swathes of delightful plants. Unfortunately, heath often plays second fiddle to eucalypt forests, with even bushwalkers sometimes dismissing it as tough scrub that impedes progress. However, anyone willing to spend time exploring heathland will soon appreciate its beauty. The flowering displays are brilliant in spring and early summer—an ideal time for a walk.

Access

It takes about two hours to drive from Hobart—the closest city—to the track heads. Follow the Tasman Highway (A3) to Sorell, where the Arthur Highway (A9) is picked up. The main walk-



A bushwalker admires the view of Cape Pillar, topped by the Blade. Part of Tasman Island can be seen on the right. *All uncredited photos by the author.* **Right**, the walking possibilities of Cape Pillar and Cape Hauy stretch out into the distance behind Tasman Island and its resident lighthouse. *Blakers*

deranged individual, Martin Bryant, went on a shooting rampage that killed 35 people and sparked Australia-wide action to toughen gun laws.

Survivors from the 1973 sinking of the *Blythe Star* landed at the small cove of Deep Glen Bay. A report from the Court of Marine Inquiry indicates that the three fittest survivors 'gave up a frontal attack on the cliffs and headed south...but they then encountered thick jungle and were forced to sleep that night inside a hollow tree, covering themselves in ferns'. Today bushwalkers occasionally follow a rough track down to the cove.

Vistas

One feature of the Tasman National Park that quickly becomes apparent on the main walks are the spectacular coastal cliffs. They surround much of the peninsula like the walls of a fortress and regularly reach heights of 200–300 metres.

The park is actually made up of two peninsulas, the Tasman and Forestier, with the better-

ing areas branch off this at Eaglehawk Neck (C388) and Forestue Road (C344) before reaching Port Arthur.

Weather

The area is walking bliss for much of the year. During the fantastic spring months, the average maximum temperature ranges from 14 to 17°C, with average monthly rainfall approaching 100 millimetres in 17 rainy days. Corresponding figures for February, the warmest month, are 19°C and 65 millimetres, respectively, with close to 14 rainy days in summer.

To increase enjoyment, it is important to match the type of walk to the season. Water is scarce during summer and into mid-autumn, reducing the attraction of overnight walks, but day walks can be good if you avoid hot days. In my opinion, late autumn to early December is ideal for walking. The area is on the south-east coast and a long way from any real mountains, so it has a mild climate throughout winter—not as warm as further up the east coast, but still good.



The peninsulas' capes are buffeted by very strong south-west to westerly winds. However, the huge cliffs often deflect the wind well over head-height, leaving a pocket of relative calm. I once emerged from the sheltering scrub lining the cliffs into the open of the Cape Pillar track only to be blown over, gashing my leg. Later that day our party was on hands and knees, fighting our way up an exposed flank of land. The day after my last trip a bushwalker was knocked over by the wind and seriously injured, but it was too windy for a rescue helicopter—the casualty had to wait another day until it was safe to land.

Water, campsites and facilities

Tasman National Park does not have the numerous free-flowing streams that are common in



the mountains. Water is available for the major overnight walks, but on day walks it is advisable to carry your own. At present only the Bivouac Bay campsite on the Tasman Coastal Track has a toilet, and facilities at track heads are fairly minimal at Fortescue Bay and non-existent elsewhere.

Following the announcement of the Three Capes walk, facilities and conditions will change. The plan suggests that camping in tents be banned: this would be a retrograde step that could eliminate camping on the existing Cape Pillar walk. It is hoped that a sensible solution prevails that protects the environment while allowing overnight camping.

Whilst there are several bush-camping options on Cape Pillar, some are too close to the walk's beginning or too far from reliable water. The first useful site is just above Lunchtime Creek,

there is room for a few tents near a small creek at the end of Corruption Gully, and another spot beside tall tea trees at the southern end of Hurricane Heath.

The main campsite is on a clear, sandy surface at Perdition Ponds. Some years ago a fire devastated this spot but the tough, wiry banksias and tea tree are reclaiming the land. The wind is funnelled into Perdition Ponds by the cliffs: the last time I camped there, by morning there was fine sand on my sleeping bag and a mini dune in the vestibule. Water from the ponds tastes strange but seems to be drinkable.

This campsite lies at the bottom of a drainage basin, which means that great care is needed in choosing a toilet site. One solution is to follow the track south for around 200 metres until you reach the plateau where drainage changes

One feature of the Tasman National Park that quickly becomes apparent on the main walks are the spectacular coastal cliffs. They surround much of the peninsula like the walls of a fortress and regularly reach heights of 200–300 metres.

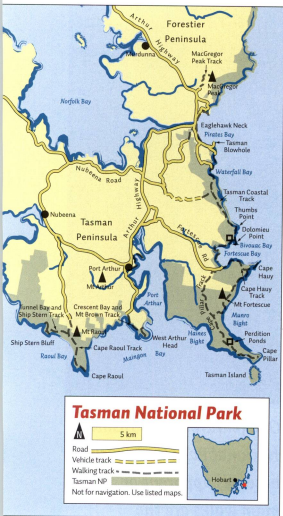
direction. It is to be hoped that the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service will use some of the \$15 million for the Three Capes project to establish facilities for tent-based walkers.

There is camping by Retakunna Creek on the Mt Fortescue leg, but it is not to my liking because of the deep shade. The tall trees also make me nervous.

Navigation, maps and further reading

The tracks on all the main walks are distinct, most are in good condition and well signposted. It is rare to encounter poor visibility and navigation is a minor issue.

Maps for the walks are the *Tasman National Park* 1:75 000, and in the 1:25 000 series, the *Tasman, Raoul and Hippolyte* sheets. (The tracks marked are not always accurate due to re-routing.) Peter and Shirley Story's *Peninsula Tracks* is a guide to walks in the district and provides good, detailed descriptions, but make sure the addendum is included as some starting points have changed due to logging.



Overnight walks

Two overnight walks are described here. Both are integral sections of a proposed multiday excursion sometimes dubbed the 'Abel Tasman Coastal Track', a series of tracks running along the east coast of both peninsulas to finish at a coastal town on the west of the Tasman Peninsula. (The Three Capes walk will be a somewhat shorter track.)

Cape Pillar

It is not just South-west Tasmania that can be wet and muddy—the Cape Pillar walk once also fitted this description. Considerable work was done after the area was declared a national park: planking and other hardening over several notoriously wet plains has left a mere 100 metres or so of bog. The striking feature of the plains is the wildflower display in spring and early summer, especially *Melaleuca squamea*, which throws a vast blanket of mauve over the landscape. On the drier, woodland-edged plains, the yellow of *hibbertia* and white of *diplarrhena* are among the delights.

The Cape Pillar walk begins 100 metres back up the road from the car park at Fortescue Bay and can be done either as a return walk or as part of a circuit over Mt Fortescue. The circuit described here tackles Mt Fortescue on the last day, but it can be done in either direction. Although the walk can be completed in two days, it is more enjoyable in three.

The track leads through forest to the first plain and then follows the woodland edge, which has a delightful variety of small flowering plants, before re-entering the forest. After roughly an hour's walk, a side track to Arthurs Peak is met; it is an interesting three-hour return walk with bay views. The wooded area continues until the track emerges to cross quite wide plains—you could be forgiven for thinking you were in South-west Tasmania! The *melaleuca* flowers are extraordinary here in spring and the double planking makes them much easier to appreciate. After about two hours, the scenery changes completely when a mossy forest and the turn-off to Mt Fortescue are reached.

From here the names of features become interesting, reflecting the feelings of the group who cut this route almost 40 years ago. The forested hill above is named Tornado Ridge and leads on to the heathy Tornado Flat before an unexpectedly steep descent to Lunchtime Creek. Further on, the track sidles Corruption Gully, (shadowed by Purgatory Hill) and out on to Hurricane Heath before finally reaching Perdion Ponds. Don't let all this rather daunting nomenclature put you off: it is usually enjoyable walking! Lunchtime Creek is a very reliable source of fresh water that really does herald a lunch stop for many walkers.

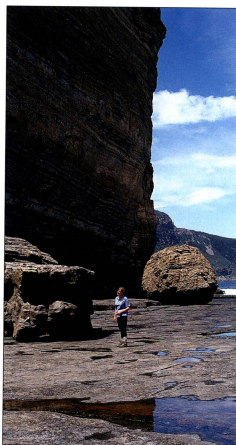
From the Mt Fortescue junction it will take about 30 minutes to reach Lunchtime Creek, with another hour's walk to the campsite at Perdion Ponds. Cliffs begin to appear, along with barer ground and stunted vegetation, just before reaching the ponds. The main pond is a bit of a surprise, resembling a small, mountain tarn.

A leisurely and most pleasant day can be spent walking to the end of Cape Pillar. The track follows the cliffs closely, giving magnificent views of Tasman Island and out to sea, and passes through old bedfordia specimens that have reached tree proportions. It takes about one and a half hours to get to the Blade, but the scramble to Chasm Lookout and on to the very end of Cape Pillar is a bit rougher underfoot, taking another 45 minutes.

A narrow causeway leads to the aptly named Blade: I fondly recall peering over the edge to discover a falcon at rest, before being treated to its exhilarating diving speed. Only a 500 metre

wide gap separates you from Tasman Island and you can often see a seal colony, as well as nesting sites for birds including gannets (identified by white rocks).

On the third day retrace your steps to the Mt Fortescue junction and turn right to descend to Retakunna Creek. (The easier course is to return all the way via the inward route: this takes about



A walker explores the exposed rock platform underneath Ship Stern Bluff, the massive cliffs rearing up behind.

two hours to reach the car park as against four hours by way of Mt Fortescue.) After crossing the creek, it is just over an hour's steady climb through forest to the high point: although it is clothed in trees, a small rock outcrop has views of the bay from Cape Haüy to Cape Pillar. On the way down there are also good views from time to time.

Some 50 minutes after the Mt Fortescue summit is the Cape Haüy track junction. The return trip takes at least two hours, but it is well worth stashing your pack and heading out. The track goes to the edge of a small passage with the amazing rock column known as The Candlestick rising from the middle, with the even thinner Totem Pole nearby. It astounds me that rock-climbers manage to get on to them: the Totem Pole was the scene of UK climber Paul Pritchard's horrific accident, which left his brain virtually oozing out of its cracked skull.

From the packs, it is only one hour along a new track to the car park.

Tasman Coastal Track

The track between Waterfall Bay and Fortescue Bay gives excellent walking along this spectacular stretch of coast. It was constructed back

Three Capes Walk Proposal

A few of the pros and cons, by Andy Wildman

A revamped bushwalking track for the Tasman Peninsula has been on the cards for quite a few years, with various plans suggested, from minor upgrades of the existing network of tracks to a major tourist development. Now that a government feasibility study is on the table, what are people saying?

Some 'pros'

The next big thing: the government believes that proposed Three Capes Track could be as popular as the Overland Track, saying in the study that 'it would quickly establish an iconic status as one of Tasmania's Great Bushwalks'. 'Demand for Great Bushwalk experiences', it goes on to say, 'has shown continued growth and interest'.

The unveiling of the peninsula: according to the Mercury, Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon said that the track would 'showcase the spectacular scenery of the Tasman Peninsula to the world'. It would do this in a way, he implies, that is not currently available.

Jobs and tourist dollars: Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service estimates that 35 new jobs will be created and an extra \$18.6 million spent by visitors each year, with an additional 50 000 bed nights per annum on the Tasman Peninsula. This is based on an expected demand of about 100 000 walkers departing in the peak season.

Sustainable management: visitors will be regulated using 'the successful Overland Track model', limiting use of the track to 60 walkers a day, requiring bookings and a \$200 fee in the peak season. It is hoped this will prevent track degradation due to overuse and make the track 'self-sustaining with respect to maintenance and management costs'.

A few 'cons'

The wrong route: the Tasmanian Greens have released a press statement saying that the proposed track is in the wrong place. 'A Three Capes Walk', they say, 'from Cape Surville on Forester Peninsula to Fortescue Bay, taking in Cape Hauy and Cape Pillar, is already in basic existence and less costly to upgrade, whereas the government



The Tasman National Park has beautiful, diverse vegetation. This image was taken at Tattnell's Hill. Grant Dixon

proposal to incorporate Cape Raoul will involve considerable expense and difficulty, including dependence on provision of water transport across Port Arthur inlet'.

Commercial operations on public land: the Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA), has joined the Greens in questioning the plan for separate commercial luxury huts. It raises 'issues of equity of access and difficulty of management for environmental values, as well as the use of public resources to construct infrastructure utilised for private profit'.

Future infrastructure: the TNPA is also concerned that the proposed track does not begin at an already significant location which, it says, 'will lead in the longer term to the perceived need to develop infrastructure at the trail head in a new location or on the edge of a National Park'.

Exclusive camping ban: the Hobart Walkers Club joined the TNPA in criticising the proposed ban on camping along the length of the track. The proposed system will restrict walkers to the huts, costing \$40 a person per night, potentially ending local bushwalkers' relationship with the area. The club's president, Andrew Davey, told the Mercury: 'We want to retain our locals' right of access, especially since many of us have helped to build and maintain the tracks in the first place, and make sure we can still do the longer overnight camping at any time of the year.'

to witness the spectacle of Waterfall Bluff as well as the side tracks below the waterfall.

Back at the packs, a good track climbs for about 45 minutes through forest to Tattnell's Hill. Much of the interesting flora on this section, such as the prolific cheeseberry and pink mountain berry, is endemic to Tasmania. Other highlights on the overstorey-free summit are the ritchia with its lance-like leaves and large white flower spikes, and the lush columns of native laurel. On the way up, a signposted track leads off to the rocky outcrop of Clemes Peak from where there are good views to the coastal cliffs lying ahead.

From Tattnell's Hill a mostly gentle walk of about two and a half hours continues, never far from the coast, winding along to Dolomieu Point before dropping to sea level at Bivouac Bay. It

may be better to stop here and do a return trip to Fortescue Bay the next morning before retracing the previous day's steps.

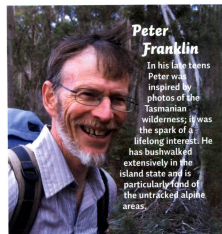
Other walks

Numerous day walks exist, including those already mentioned to Cape Hauy, Tattnell's Hill and Mt Fortescue. Other suggestions follow.

Cape Raoul

This delightful walk on the south-west side of the Tasman Peninsula begins at the end of Stormlea Road. A gentle uphill to Raoul Lookout passes through a considerable area of white cotton bush and yellow pea flowers—colourful in November. The descent from the lookout passes through eucalypt and dogwood to a plateau edge with a protecting tunnel of casuarinas, then emerges on to heathland before the final section to the end of the cape. A short side track leads to a very good outlook on to a seal colony usually found in the shelter of Cape Raoul.

Before the First World War a visiting squadron of the Royal Navy used the cape for target



practice and destroyed several rock columns. It is to be hoped that attitudes to this sort of desecration have changed.

Tunnel Bay and Ship Stern Bluff

At the base of Ship Stern Bluff's high cliffs lies a wide platform where huge waves roll in—dedicated surfers are said to find it exhilarating. Tunnel Bay is just that, a natural tunnel through the cliffs into a tiny inlet. To reach these sites, follow the Cape Raoul track for 30 minutes to a signposted junction, then turn right to descend to the coast, picking up an old vehicle track just before Ship Stern Bluff.

Crescent Bay and Mt Brown

Although there are blowholes on this walk, a beautifully shaped beach with great views to Cape Pillar and Tasman Island is the real attraction. The walk begins at the end of the road opposite the Remarkable Cave tourist attraction and leads over sandy heathlands. At an obvious junction, one branch heads up to Mt Brown whilst the other goes to Crescent Bay.

MacGregor Peak

The walk to MacGregor Peak begins just before Eaglehawk Neck. There is an old mossy forest of musk and sassafras on the sheltered top, as well as good views to the coast. 📍

in the 1970s, with Frank Morley as the driving force—his dedication is acknowledged on a display at the Waterfall Bay car park.

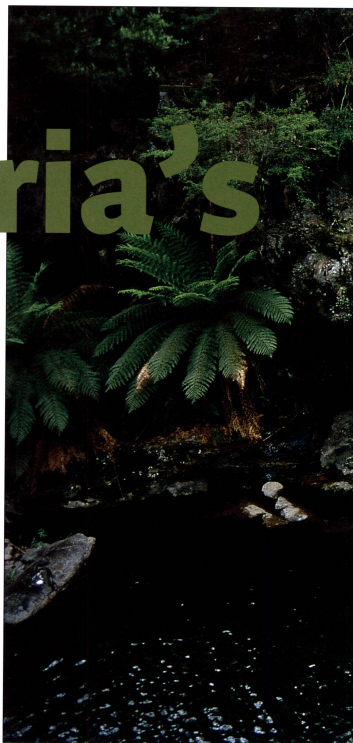
The walk can be done in a day but transport will be needed at both ends. However, if done over two days it is a delightful, moderately graded trip that more readily allows side excursions. It can also be combined with the Cape Pillar walk. The track can be walked from either end, but from a bush-camping perspective it is probably better to walk north-south.

Begin at Eaglehawk Neck and take in the blowhole attractions before following a good track for 30 minutes to the Waterfall Bay car park. (Alternatively, you can start here.) A junction beside a creek and small waterfall is reached only a short distance from the car park—it is worth dropping your pack and wandering out

Victoria's Secret



Stephen Curtain traded the heat of summit fever for the cool cascades of an alpine river. He describes a watery paradise



MY EARLIEST BUSHWALKS IN THE VICTORIAN ALPS WERE HEATED AFFAIRS. As a novice I was introduced to the glory of walking off-track in some of the most far-flung reaches of the Alps. More often than not, these trips were synonymous with lugging a rucksack under a sweltering, mid-summer sun.

Summit fever probably had something to do with it. We often chose to follow the highest alpine ridges and peaks to fuel our 'high-altitude' fix. The faster we could get to the highest part of a particular ridge or peak, the better we could savour the faultless mountain views that awaited. But often on windless, scorching days, such places became unbearable. For some reason I also considered that being dehydrated for short stints was somewhat part and parcel of the experience. Not quite the norm, but not far off it either. In my drive to experience that summit Shangri-La feeling as soon and for as long as I could, I can recall coercing my walking companions with something along the lines of 'Nah, we can drink when we get to the top of the spur. Let's keep pushing on for now.'

For several summers I considered myself, and my walking buddies, to be quite 'strong' and almost unbreakable—we were proud of our alpine-



walking feats. Most of our walks were demanding, being long-distance, and required numerous nights out, sometimes for several weeks. Remote, high spurs and ridges were a speciality until a particular 'dry' walk in the Alps altered my outlook almost irrevocably.

On a blistering hot and gusty afternoon, as I plodded up Kosciuszko National Park's Townsend Spur with my best friend John Fish, I stopped and shuddered—warm drops of blood began to seep from my nostrils. *Shit*. My sense of summit fever waned. We didn't have much water, probably a litre between us. I quickly swilled a mouthful of the precious liquid and continued, for our chosen route up this beastly spur was far from complete. Later, I became acutely aware that I had stopped sweating—I had pushed myself too far. My forearms and face glistened with a

mosaic pattern of sickly salt crystals while my skin had become hot and red. I grew weak and disorientated. I began to stumble more than I should have. After several hours of walking with blurred vision and a numbing headache, we came upon a godsend of a trickling creek, besides which we eased ourselves gingerly, like old men. Shamefully, I must admit it was only half a dozen years ago.

Sweltering summer walking in the Alps had lost its appeal.

It's probably unsurprising that soon afterwards I became a fan of walking along major watercourses in the Alps. The allure of tackling green, lush wild places was fresh and exciting, drinking water was always close at hand (read well hydrated) and, on average, the air temperature was at least 15°C cooler! Successive over-

Ryan Strating looks over the drop on the first of the many substantial cascades found on the river. **Left, a simple pleasure; gulping the fresh stuff.**

All photos by the author

night trips down rivers like the Dargo and Moroka, where the air was deliciously cool and oodles of water splashed about, reinvigorated my desire to head into the wilds of the Victorian Alps again.

Easter 2004

Friends Ryan Strating, Lizzy Skinner and I lounged on our backs, warming them on worn, river-rock slabs in the morning sun. Every so often I leant forward and munched on a little more cereal from my bowl before reclining once more. We lay near the top of an enormous

WANDERING Wonderful Waterways

Monica Chapman with five ideas for river walking in Victoria

A multitude of magnificent rivers and streams exist across Victoria. The Murray, Mitta Mitta and Snowy are well known, but for the adventurous bushwalker seeking remoteness or a challenge, the following are worthy of exploration.

Little River

The Little River flows through cavernous gorges and topples over high ledges into bubbling pools before joining the Snowy River. Following it entails negotiating huge boulders, blackberry thickets, clambering carefully down cliffs and crossing the not-so-little river numerous times, with some crossings needing a deep wade or even a swim. Only very experienced walkers possessing considerable skill in route finding through cliffs should attempt the journey. The rugged, trackless terrain is definitely not suitable for the faint-hearted and can be dangerous. The trip downstream from the road bridge takes three to four days. While the waterfalls are best in spring, the trip is much safer in summer or autumn. Tent sites are extremely limited.

Moroka River

North-east of Licola, the upper reaches of the Moroka River are reasonably well known. However, few people venture through the whole gorge. From Horseyard Flat, well-used tracks lead to the waterfalls in the upper section of the small gorge. Where the tracks end, rough walking continues along the river. Further downstream a second gorge with large pools requires a swim or, alternatively, a rough bypass on the northern bank can be used. Various options exist for three- or four-day circuits and are best attempted in spring or early summer.

Caledonia and Macalister Rivers

If splashing along a riverbed is your thing, a trip along the Caledonia and Macalister Rivers is a

perfect way to spend several hot summer days. These two rivers flow through the relatively remote landscape north of Licola. The route through the small gorges on the Caledonia requires some scrambling, but is reasonably easy off-track walking. From the Red Spur the Caledonia can be followed to its confluence with the Macalister near The Sisters. The wider Macalister River can then be followed all the way to Lyndon Flat. When walking along the river flats becomes too scrubby or you just want to cool off, it's easy to wade downstream. The slower pace gives a different perspective of the river and the surrounding hills. It's possible to plan various two- and three-day circuits including sections of these rivers. Alternatively a five- to six-day circuit includes both rivers.

Reedy Creek

In the remote north-east is the infrequently visited Reedy Creek, a large tributary of the Buchan River. Concealed in the deep valley of this creek is an impressive, canyon-like gorge. Access along closed four-wheel-drive tracks on ridges north or south lead toward the creek. From these ridges, access routes down into the creek valley require excellent off-track navigation and the ability to scramble down steep spurs. Campsites are scarce. Where narrow embankments exist they are scrubby and walking in the creek itself is easier. Caution is required on the slippery rocks and when clambering over numerous obstacles. In the narrow chasm, the rock walls dive straight into the water on both sides and overhang above. Wading is the only way through. This is not a place to be when water levels are high!

Lerderderg River

To the west of Melbourne, the Lerderderg River provides a unique escape from the hustle and bustle of the big city without the long drive. Tracks provide good day and weekend walks, but the untracked walk from O'Brien's Crossing along the river to Darleys Ford is quite rugged and takes most groups three days. Signs of the gold-mining era such as aqueducts, mine shafts and stone walls are evident.

Although nothing was said initially, we all knew instinctively that we had to visit this magical pool. We left our overnight camping gear behind and took only lunch essentials. Leaving the top of the waterfall, we had to traverse through prickly head-high heath before we were able to assess our descent route. It took us half an hour to negotiate several rock bands before only a final steep forested slope separated us from the growing roar of the waterfall. As we came closer our excitement intensified. The noise of pounding water became increasingly amplified by the soaring cliffs surrounding us. Like ancient guardians of an aquatic palace, old-growth eucalypt giants stood like sentinels downstream of the waterfall. We slipped past them, sensing that we were entering a special place. Finally unimpeded by

vegetation, the full glory of this tumbling cascade could now be truly appreciated. My skin tingled. As I set about staging a self-timer shot on my camera, clouds intermittently blocked the sun. It resulted in an ever-changing scene of light intensity and vibrancy—from moody, earthy tones of stone to sudden fluorescent flashes of light.

Via a short climb, we gained the large rock shelf that surrounded the pool on three sides. Sunrises shimmered upon our newly found pool and backlit its lush, fern inhabitants. The pool's up-slope edge abutted vertical cliff that was bombarded by the waterfall. Not missing a beat, Lizzy, Ryan and I quickly reassured our reclining positions on the shelf as if we had never finished breakfast! Creatures of leisure that we are!

Three days before, we had first slipped into this remote river valley. Around mid-morning on the first day, we sauntered down a relatively open spur of snow-gum woodland. Numerous well-known peaks peered through gaps in the trees including a distant Mt Feathertop. As we gradually descended, the transition into tall forest was uneventful bar a meeting with a red-bellied black snake. Unaware, I cruised past, the snake clearly unperturbed by my presence. Conversely, Ryan, close on my heels, momentarily 'walked on air'.

Several hundred metres lower, the first rocky bluffs and steepening contours signalled that



Lizzy Skinner eases herself down an abseil near one of the river's higher drops.

waterfall, mesmerised by the magical scene that unravelled before us.

As this particular alpine river unloaded its contents over a cliff-edge, the cascade exploded into a shower of a million or so water droplets. They hung momentarily suspended in space, before morphing into a multitude of rainbow-coloured pixels that eddied and danced in the morning light. Some 30 metres below us, the remainder of the waterfall completed its dizzying descent and emptied into a dark-coloured body of water, roughly oval in shape and 30 metres at its widest. If not for the distinctly eucalypt-dominant vegetation nearby, it would have been easy to mistake this deep tannin pool, cradled beneath a rock amphitheatre, for a mammoth tarn more at home in a cirque environment like Tasmania's Western Arthurs.

the 'real' descent was about to begin. The terrain transformed from a gentle gradient to distinctly perpendicular, necessitating much zig-zagging along grassy ramps and rock terraces as we slowly nudged a route down to the river. At one stage we had to down-climb a short slab, lowering our rucksacks from a solid tree anchor. We had come equipped with a climbing rope, a harness each and belay hardware—a close inspection of the map back at home had

indicated that such gear might be handy. Although the underlying rock appeared to be solid and stable, we gingerly checked and re-checked our moves on foot- and handholds before placing our weight on them.

It was a relief to reach the water's edge after the testing descent. A slight throbbing in my temples signalled a dehydration headache, but a slosh from the river on my face and a cold, quenching drink returned my sense of normality. Our surroundings came back into crystal-clear focus. We admired the dozens of elegant tree ferns that hung from the steep rock walls above us, the enormous fronds of *Dicksonia antarctica* resembling gigantic umbrellas. Higher still, stands of manna and narrow-leaved peppermint rose majestically, their leafy crowns swaying in the late afternoon breeze. Most bushwalkers would be familiar with the scenario of settling for a less than perfect campsite in favour of pushing on for the 'perfect' site, never more than a few minutes' walk further—or so we delude ourselves. With the evening air growing distinctly cool, we happily agreed to make the most of a mildly scrubby campsite a kilometre from our put-in point on the river. While we didn't resort to 'Backyard Blitz' style refurbishments, a flat, leafy tent site was soon cleared, free of imposing branch stubs and prickly forest litter. The campsite's saving grace was nearby. Protruding from the river itself, a dry, round-topped boulder served as a ready-made dinner table, roomy enough for three plus a stove, insulation mats and food bags. We actively sought and discovered similar arrangements at subsequent nights' campsites. We peeled off our soiled socks and boots and aired our feet. It was a true delight to walk barefoot on the river-cleansed and smoothed rock.

The river's character had altered in only a short distance that day. At its highest reaches a tributary, infant in size and volume, scoured and rushed down a moss-lined, mottled green runnel—barely 20 centimetres wide—with tremendous speed. It continued across a rock face before it leapt from a rocky ramp as a graceful spout some 150 metres above the river proper. As we boiled water for some tasty miso soup, the river flowed past our feet in higher volume but with a more relaxed nature as it bubbled from pond to pond through a rock garden. Little did we anticipate the river's awesome leaps downstream.

The following morning, after we had tired of our lotus-like positions on the eating- and cooking rock, we pushed on. Only several hundred metres on, the river—now some five to six metres wide—transformed in appearance again, its pace distinctly quickening. It was clear that it followed a line of least resistance along an obvious fault line. Deep, naturally occurring bathtub-sized holes tried and failed to stem the river's flow for short periods. As the river flowed over the rim of broad, almost horizontal rock slabs, tiny curtain waterfalls appeared.

The following day we were greeted with the first of many dramatic water features. From our vantage point even several hundred metres upstream, we spied a yawning space that dropped off beyond the river. A major waterfall.

Some weeks earlier in Melbourne, we had all gathered to practise abseiling and basic prusiking in a suburban park. We must have been



Ryan pauses (and poses) beside a magnificent waterfall not to be found in any wilderness calendar.

Lying beside the tannin-coloured pool, water slopping at my toes, my curiosity was aroused. *If it's a slice of heaven here, what lies further downstream?*

quite a sight. In fading light, wearing head-torches, we wriggled in mid-air from ropes we had anchored on the cross-beam of a barbecue shelter's roof. Not quite the wilderness experience but useful nonetheless. Bemused joggers sauntered past.

Back on the river, we sidled the eastern bank a short distance through tea tree, and glanced up-

Several easily negotiable waterfalls followed without the need for a rope. Lizzy entertained us with her continuous babble and, during a short break, revealed a delightful snack she had discovered in an Asian supermarket: sheets of banana combined with coconut, direct from Vietnam.

Although the river's height was low—a high mark of bleached branch debris hung in the trees—we remained vigilant, for a single, slimy river rock could be our undoing. While the potentially risky abseiling had gone smoothly, we were constantly mindful of the less obvious risks such as innocent-looking, slippery boulders. We were at least a hard day-and-a-half's walk from the vehicle, but even a mild ankle sprain could have conceivably tripled that time. So while the walking itself had been physically straightforward, mentally it proved to be taxing. Late in the afternoon, I felt sapped of energy and lethargy seeped in. For the imaginative bushwalker, this state, when coupled with the bush's obscure shadows and near silence, proves to be a boon. I began to day-dream. Just then, a dark shadow flitted in, then out, of my field of vision. Not a sound. It was enough to make me whisper 'eek!' under my breath. I paused as my pulse raced. Lizzy and Ryan were similarly frozen. On the western bank of the river, a dark blur brushed quickly under an archway of tree fern fronds. Then nothing. It had been watching us. We softly murmured a few words and studied the opposite bank for a minute or so. Finally satisfied that our mystery being had moved on, we continued. A wild dog?

I remained paranoid for the remainder of the afternoon, glancing over my shoulder more than once to check that we were not being followed. With some relief, later I again attuned to the sounds around us—only the soft babble of the river and the occasional snapping of twigs underfoot.

By day three of our trip, our mood had definitely relaxed and we decided to camp early at about 3 pm. The day was still warm enough for a swim so we eagerly made the most of an outstanding deep pool nearby. We swam and floated on our backs before preparing our evening meal on the largest rock slab we had camped on yet.

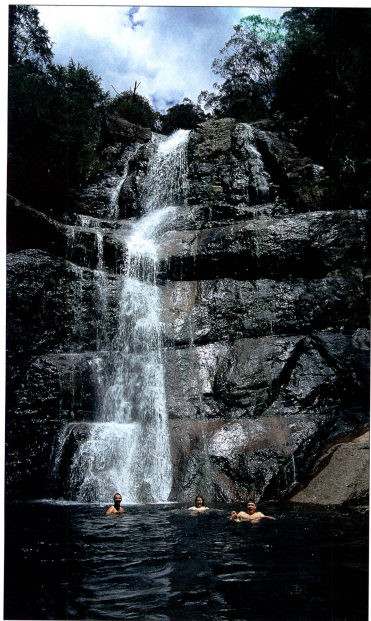
Next morning, our mindset was one of satisfied accomplishment. We had navigated a stretch of barely four or five kilometres along the river, but had encountered numerous waterfalls of about ten to 12 metres in height including one that necessitated an abseil. While Lizzy and Ryan wandered off for a squiz nearby, I studied the western valley wall that rose more steeply than its eastern counterpart. The former would be our exit route. Suddenly, I heard a cry of excitement. I hurried off in its direction. Barely 50 metres downstream, Ryan and Lizzy had discovered a grand waterfall—the biggest and highest yet—that emptied into a magical pool 30 metres below. Until then, we had been unaware of its presence because thick tea tree had obscured our view from camp.

I was jolted out of my relaxed state, my mind beginning to race at the thought of a giant abseil down the face of the waterfall. Unfortunately, I couldn't see the base of the cliff safely, so not without regret abandoned the idea. The prospect of rappelling down a magnificent face, showered by pure mountain water on a glorious sunny day, was thrilling. However, the sight of spindly melaleucas nearby more or less confirmed what we soon accepted. They were poor anchor choices, while our rope may have been too short to reach the base anyway. It was at that point that we resorted to having breakfast at the top of the waterfall. We mulled over our choices and concluded that we'd visit the pool below as a half-day excursion anyway. We were not regretful in the least. The day was a true joy. Lying beside the tannin-coloured pool, water slopping at my toes, my curiosity was aroused. *If it's a slice of heaven here, what lies further downstream?*

That evening we returned to the campsite, revitalised from our bracing swims in the mountain pool, and slept fitfully.

We rose early to tackle our return, an off-track route to the vehicles more than 1000 metres above. Up high, a lovely cool breeze accompanied us as we looked back over the majority of our river route. As I resumed my slow, rhythmic plod upwards, the countless, idle pools and river-sculptured features had already begun to settle calmly in my mind. We reached the fire track several hours later. En route, a quick but friendly meeting with a parks ranger in his vehicle confirmed that our walking group was the second ever—in his opinion—to venture into the depths of the untracked river valley from which we had emerged.

As the Australian Alps seem to be experiencing increasingly warm summers, it's comforting to know that most of the waterfalls we visited—still unnamed and unmarked on today's maps—will, we hope, remain as a cool, watery paradise for those who seek them. 🌿



Stephen Curtain

is a Telemark skiing nut. He dabbles in ski, rafting and trekking epics in Australia and overseas and teaches outdoor education in Victoria and New South Wales. Stephen often dances on the inside and is presently producing an Australian Alps free-heel skiing film.

Ryan (left), Lizzy and the author bask in the rather chilly, tannin-stained pool below the highest waterfall encountered.

stream. We estimated that the waterfall tumbled down about 20 metres. On either side an imposing cliffline of a similar height extended downstream. Finding a route around would take time and we quickly discussed our options. It was probably a formality more than anything as, deep down, we all wanted to play with our toys. It wasn't long before we had rigged a single, nine millimetre rope around two secure tree anchors. Ensuring that the tails had reached the bottom of the abseil and that a self-belay was secured, Lizzy, then Ryan slipped over the edge. Shortly after, I followed without incident and pulled through the line from below. So far, so good.



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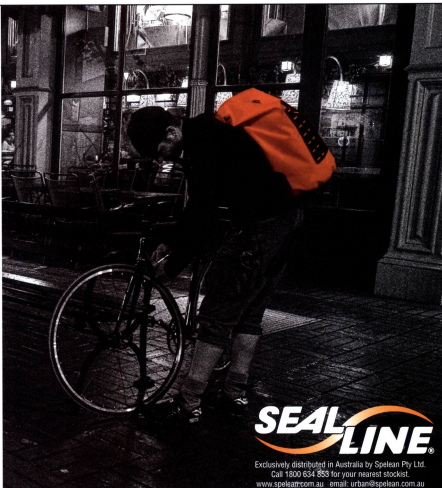
You think city life's more civilised than the outdoors? Try riding through crowded downtown streets in the predawn rain while choking on exhaust and dodging pedestrians. Try slogging through a sea of dirty-grey slush as you race for the last train of the night. All of a sudden "civilisation" seems a lot less genteel.

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Photo: John Laptad



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AUSTRALIANS ENJOY ONE OF THE RICHEST AND MOST COLOURFUL populations of bird life in the world, with over 700 recorded species. However, because of their flighty nature people rarely get close enough to birds to appreciate their exquisite detail. It is this elusiveness that is undoubtedly one of the reasons why birdwatching has become such a popular pastime.

Our parrots are particularly admired by overseas visitors, who are captivated by their range and variety of colours. Surprisingly, the favourite parrot for tourists is the common galah! It's easy to see the attraction of these birds to those less familiar with this clown of the Australian bush and their bright pink and grey plumage.

The name galah is borrowed from the Aboriginal Yuwaalaraay language of northern New South Wales. This cockatoo shares the stereotypical characteristics of the 'average Australian'—cheerful, gregarious and easy-going. They are popular with most Australians who perhaps identify with their larrikin attitude to life.

Our forests and bushland are adorned with even more beautiful parrots than the galah, such as rosellas, lorikeets and the pink cockatoo. In 1835 the British explorer, Major Thomas Mitchell, made reference in his diary to a cockatoo that he had frequently come across in central NSW.

He wrote: 'Few birds more enliven the monotonous hues of the Australian forest than this beautiful species whose pink-coloured wings and flowing crest might have embellished the air of a more voluptuous region.' This bird soon became known as the 'Major Mitchell cockatoo'.

The beauty of parrots is perhaps only surpassed by some of our smaller birds such as the robins—a group of small bush birds that has endeared itself to ornithologists and bird fanciers alike. There are 16




species of robins found in Australia and five of these are affectionately known as 'robin redbreasts' and are readily identified by their colourful names of pink, rose, red-capped, scarlet and flame robins.

Another all-time favourite is the little blue wren. The male wrens are among the most exquisite small birds in the world and superlatives such as the lovely wren, splendid wren and superb wren reflect the impact of this bird species on our early settlers. These descriptive names have since been adopted as the birds' common names.

The most familiar of all the Australian wrens is the superb blue wren. With its cocked tail, quick movements and lively staccato call, it readily attracts attention in the parks, gardens and bushland of south-east Australia including Tasmania. It's the boldest of all the fairy wrens, showing little fear of man.

From these endearing little bush birds we move to the majestic birds of prey that really exemplify the diversity of Australian bird life. One of the most familiar birds of prey is the nankeen kestrel, Australia's smallest falcon. It is often seen hovering beside the verge of country roads, from where it watches the ground with extraordinary vision; wings quivering and tail fanned, before suddenly plummeting head first to take its prey.

At night the Australian bush is an eerie experience for the novice camper. The birds of the night—the owls, nightjars and frogmouths—come to life, adding a chorus of strange sounds, from the call of the barking owl, somewhat resembling a dog, to the deep, repetitive 'oom oom oom oom' of the tawny frogmouth. The blood-curdling call of the bush curlew has often been described as sounding like a woman being strangled!

In addition to a good set of binoculars, getting a field guide to Australian native birds will further enhance your birdwatching experience. 

A brolga settles over its eggs on a flooded creek about 25 kilometres east of West Wyalong, New South Wales.

Left, split second timing: a kookaburra brakes at the entrance to its nest hollow near Crowther, NSW.



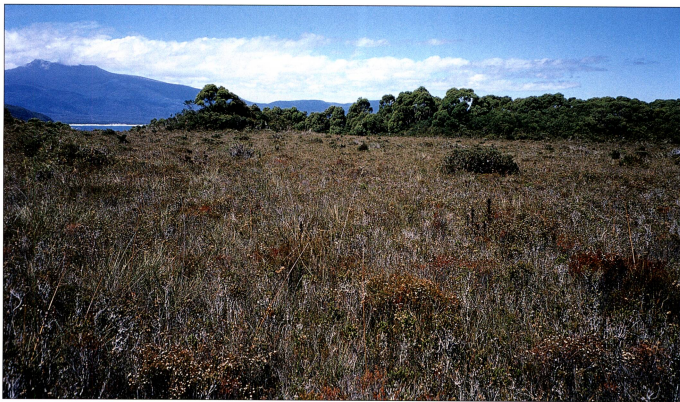


An eastern yellow robin with a lot of mouths to feed near Cowra, NSW. **Left**, the quirky looking plumed egret young, protected by their more elegant parent. (Leeton, NSW.) **Right**, a sacred kingfisher shows off its cray catch in a creek embankment at Canowindra, NSW.



John Cooper has been an amateur naturalist for as long as he can remember, but it wasn't until 1986, at the age of 46, that John decided to record his subjects on film. John soon developed a passion for serious wildlife photography, designing specialised hides for photographing birds on land and water, and tall towers for reaching into tree canopies. In 2004 John won the 'Threatened and Endangered Animals or Plants' section of the ANZANG Nature and Landscape Photographer of the Year.

Mud, Glorious Mud, but Hold the Fungus



Karen Johnson spent a summer walking and working in South-west Tasmania. Her aim: to prevent the spread of the bog-loving root rot fungus that is devastating native plants

TO BUSHWALKERS, TASSIE MEANS BOGS. Internationally acclaimed, up to the crotch, mud. This makes bog reading a serious occupation. Does the mud shimmer, wobble, or is it dead still? What colour is it—chocolate, sandy or yellow? All serious considerations when you take on South-west Tassie. To be able to read a bog at a distance and at speed is the key.

And Vicky Bonwick and I know bogs. We have the dubious honour of having walked the boggiest tracks in Tasmania's World Heritage Area over three action-packed months. Why? Well, the short of it is, we were paid. Paid to record the extent of the dreaded root rot fungus, an

introduced fungus that causes disease and death in many native plants. It likes bogs and thrives in the warm, moist lowlands of South-west Tassie, insidiously travelling through water, moving from root to root and hitching rides on animals such as humans.

South-west Tasmania is our backyard and playground—we thought we knew it well. But we were gobsmacked at what we were seeing less than half an hour after setting off on the Port Davey Track. 'It's everywhere', Vicky stated, turning around, arms extended in a hopeless shrug. Tim Rudman (Department of Primary Industry & Water) had been our coach, familiarising us with root rot in all its guises. As the extent of the infection along the track sank in, Tim's words came back to haunt us. 'In an old infection you might not see the boundaries between healthy and diseased vegetation as the disease front may have moved kilometres away from the track.'

We were amazed. While walking through the same area the previous year, we had not looked twice, simply accepting the sparsity of wildflowers. Regions with lots of flowers had surprised and awed us, but we had never stopped to think that this might be an effect created by their absence elsewhere.

Demoralised, we arrived at the Crossing River, a magnificent, tannin-rich river with its head-

Signs of root rot fungus—the black of the dead white waratahs and the red of the dying Baeckea.

Karen Johnson

waters in the Arthur Range and its outflow in the Davey River. Not even this sight could salvage our mood. We couldn't believe how widespread the fungus was, and this was only day one. 'Oi, don't s'pose you got any food?' came a voice from behind. 'We've just done the Eastern and Western Arthurs and are low on supplies.' A stubbled face emerged from a Gore-Tex jacket and grinned. Glancing past the figure, I spotted two others. 'There were five of us', he continued. A feeling of dread filled my stomach as visions of Pearce 'The Pieman'—an escaped convict who ate his mates—filled my head. Tasmania is haunted, in my mind, anyway. You can't have that sort of history without it scarring the landscape and repeating through the ages. Looking bewildered at my expression, he continued: 'Both of them had bad knees, turned back early on. And by the way, I'm Gary.'

Our paths crossed frequently on the way to Melaleuca. Usually we would be gazing at a piece of moorland, looking for dead, dying or discoloured plants, when Gary's friends passed at a cracking pace. After half an hour or so Gary would appear and welcome the excuse to stop

for a chat. He was in training for a marathon and hoping to lose weight. He was succeeding.

By the time we arrived at Melaleuca we had walked through a complex mosaic of healthy and diseased vegetation. We spent a night in the ranger's hut with a couple from South Australia who had been monitoring the orange-bellied parrots. 'There's a guy running up and down the airstrip,' they commented. 'Aah, Gary,' we said after seeing the shirtless figure. 'He's starving and training for a marathon.'

On the morning of day six, cheered by the company of our hut mates, we found ourselves able to face another day at the 'office' and set off on the South Coast Track. We were in and out of infected areas until Deadmans Bay, just east of the spectacular Ironbound Range (around 1000 metres high). This range forms a natural barrier to the spread of the disease as root rot doesn't survive above 700 metres in Tassie. However, the previous summer track workers had reported the fungus east of the Ironbound Range. Our task was to see how far it had spread. In the mud on boots, gaiters, tent pegs and other gear, people have the capacity to spread the fungus long distances and over natural barriers.

We were now dealing with recent root-rot infections, characterised by absolutely spectacular

autumnal colours. The iridescent reds and yellows of heath plants or the morbid black of the white waratah are spectacular until you realise their cause—plants in their death throes.

Walkers arriving at Deadmans Bay after crossing the Ironbound Range often keep walking right through camp and out to sea, where they may remain floating for some time. Emerging with renewed vigour and enthusiasm, they tell about exchanging tales of bogs beaten and bogs to come. One walker stated that the track was a disgrace, an environmental disaster. 'You want to see environmental disaster,' Vicky said. 'You should see what the root rot fungus is doing. Money is poured into improving tracks while next to nothing goes into educating people about root rot. Anyway, it's Tassie, of course you're going to get wet and filthy.'

After Deadmans Bay, I spotted a dead white waratah surrounded by the stunning colours of dying heath. My heart sank. The infected area appeared to be away from the track so I removed my boots and stepped into things—much easier to rid of potential infection. 'Another dead



Karen Johnson

spends her time enjoying her favourite place—Tasmania. Remote, windswept coasts and mountains are her love. Her work as a botanist provides a good excuse to visit many wonderful areas.

waratah over there, and the disease has come off the track via the drainage over here', Vicky called from 100 metres away. I fidgeted in my thongs, slapping at mosquitoes. My lily white, boot-wrinkled feet were providing a feast. Walkers eyed me with suspicion. I was too far away to explain: all I could do was behave strangely and confirm the known insanity of all scientists.

Prior Beach is the next natural barrier. This four kilometre stretch of windswept sand leads to the boat crossing at New River Lagoon, beyond which walkers are in for a treat. The moorlands behind Rocky Boat Inlet and Osmiridium Bay, and the rest of the South Coast Track to Cockle Creek, have so far escaped the ravages of root rot fungus. As we swooned through these moorlands, we became excited and hopeful. If complacency could be avoided, the disease's spread might be prevented.

On day 15, we headed for Hobart with other dishevelled, ruddy-cheeked individuals. 'Did you see any of that fungus thingy you were looking for?' a man in a grubby shirt enquired. 'What does it do, anyway?' called out a young, spiky-haired guy from the back. 'And why haven't we heard more about it?'

During the rest of our summer, we observed root rot fungus on the South-west Cape Circuit but, amazingly, found the magnificent South-west Cape Range free from disease. Frenchmans Cap, Lake Rhona and Hamilton Range tracks were also fungus free. The Mt Anne area is currently

Hitchhiking to our wild areas

Just as popular culture is aggressively replacing indigenous culture everywhere, the same is true for ecology. As the world homogenises and climate changes, our native plants and animals are facing more new diseases and introduced species than ever before. These invaders have the ability to alter entire ecosystems and can reach into the heart of wilderness by hitching a ride on a bushwalker, helicopter or boat. Yet it is very rare that we hear a peep about such things from our conservation groups and politicians. Eliciting more than a peep are Jennie Whinam (Department of Primary Industries & Water, Tasmania) and her colleagues from the Antarctic Division, who recently published a paper on the number of alien plants and animals hitching a ride and their methods.

In 2002, the personal field clothing and equipment of 64 expeditioners heading for Macquarie Island was inspected. An incredible total of 98 seeds and fruits and five moss shoots were collected. The seeds were planted for identification purposes: by the end of four weeks, 163 had germinated; after eight months 115 were still alive, with many flowering.

Velcro fasteners took out the dubious award for the item most likely to be carrying hitchhikers. Gaiters, waterproof jackets and socks were frequent offenders, and, more generally, the pockets, seams and cuffs of outdoors clothing. Not surprisingly, grasses were the most common alien.

The good news is that changes have been implemented to reduce the number of alien species heading to the far south. People are now vigilant about clean gear, especially things with Velcro, deep pockets, cuffs and seams, and equipment and cases such as camera bags. It is now common practice to vacuum inside packs and along seams, wash gear in hot water or soak it for an hour in a solution of one part bleach to 20 parts water.

As walkers, we can spread pests, weeds and diseases between distant wilderness areas and even between local parks. However, we also have the knowledge to halt the spread of hitchhikers. Further information on weeds, pests and diseases in Australia can be found by searching the web. Many useful sites are available, including the following:

www.weeds.org.au
www.anbg.gov.au/weeds/index.html
www.weeds.crc.org.au/weed-management/index.html
www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/p-root-rot/index.html

Information on specific parks and reserves throughout Australia is best obtained by approaching the local management authority.

okay, although Scotts Peak Dam Road, at the start of the three main approaches, is infected. As of 2006, these areas were still thought to be free from root rot fungus. Walkers heading to Tasmania can expect to come across wash-down stations on the following tracks in the World Heritage Area: South-west Cape; South Coast; Port Davey and Frenchmans Cap. ●

The facts

Tasmania's World Heritage Area is under attack from an invisible assailant. *Phytophthora* (fy-toff-thora) *cinnamomi*—otherwise known as root rot fungus, cinnamon fungus, jarrah dieback and wildflower dieback—is altering the ecology of moorlands, heathlands and dry eucalypt forests. This fungus is listed as a threatening process in the Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act 1992.

Field signs of root rot fungus

- Death or disease in plant species known to be susceptible, while those species known to be resistant remain healthy.
- Discolouration (most commonly reds and yellows) in foliage of diseased plants.
- Sharp disease fronts or boundaries between healthy and diseased vegetation.
- Spread of disease over time (oldest deaths in centre or towards uphill end of slopes).

Preventing its spread

- Keep your bushwalking gear clean: wash your boots, gaiters, overpants, tent pegs, toilet trowel and other gear between walks. This is best done where water can be disposed of in the stormwater system. Do not dispose of it on your garden as it may contain the fungus.
- Use the wash-down stations provided. Remove all mud from your boots, gaiters and other gear before proceeding into areas known to be free of root rot fungus.
- Ensure that tent pegs, toilet trowel and anything else placed in soil is washed or wiped clean where it becomes soiled.
- This is another reason not to dig up soil or plants in the bush.

Further information on root rot fungus is available at www.dpiw.tas.gov.au

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High Country Huts and Plains



The historical huts and upland plains of Kosciuszko National Park are two of its most distinctive features. *Harry Hill's* walk takes in three unburnt plains, four unique huts, and a lot in between

Walkers take a rest on the verandah of Old Currango Hut. All uncredited photos by the author

The walk at a glance

Grade	Moderate
Length	Four days
Distance	45–50 kilometres
Type	High Country plains and forests
Region	Northern Kosciuszko National Park
Nearest towns	Cabramurra, Tumut
Start, finish	Coinbil Hut
Maps	Rules Point and Peppercom 1:25 000 CMA
Best time	October to April
Special points	Old huts, karst topography, Blue Waterholes, waterfall

TWO OF THE FEATURES THAT SET KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK APART from other mountain regions in Australia are the upland plains and the huts. The disastrous bushfires of January 2003 destroyed 20 huts and consumed large areas of plain. The plains are recovering, but the huts are gone forever. However, there is still an area where three of the best-known, unburnt plains (Long Plain, Gurrangorambla Flat/Currango Plain and Cooleman Plain) and four of the most historic huts (Coinbil, Old Currango, Pocket and Coolamine) can be visited.

Four days is recommended for covering the walk's 45–50 kilometres. Inspecting the huts, watching brumbies, marvelling at the landscape—plains, forests, mountain peaks, karst topography, clear creeks and a waterfall—will make each day full. Be prepared for weather changes. All the creeks carry potable water.

Coinbil Hut is on Long Plain, a 20 kilometre, treeless plain along the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee River. Years ago the area was snow leases, valued as summer grazing areas by Riverina and south-west slopes pastoralists. The building's namesake was a very extensive western property that held the lease for a number of years, with Coinbil the Wiradjuri word for bunyip. The hut is popular with campers, walkers, fishermen and horse riders—some are usually in residence. The building was almost destroyed in December 1987 when a huge, black sallee tree growing a metre from the building snapped at ground level during a violent storm and crashed on to the hut. Two horse riders who were in the building at the time experienced shock—severe shock.

Fortunately, interested members of Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) and National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) undertook the hut's restoration. The photos and written record, displayed inside, should be inspected.

When to go

The best time for this walk is from October to April as the region is often snow covered in winter.

Safety/warnings

The area is at a high elevation—weather can change rapidly. Ensure you have enough warm and waterproof clothing.

Further reading

My books *Camping and Bushwalking in Northern KNP* and *Best Bushwalks in KNP* are a good source of further information about walking in this area. Hut history is covered in *Old Currango and Cooinbil—Recollections and Restoration*.

Access

Leave the Snowy Mountains Highway at Rules Point and follow Long Plain Road for 14 kilometres. Turn right at the sign for Cooinbil. The start and finish point for the walk is Cooinbil Hut (Rules Point GR 445556).



Andrew Bain admires the limestone landscape of Blue Waterholes.

Andrew Bain

The walk

Distance for day one: 11.8 kilometres

Pick up traces of a road at the bottom of the horse yards and follow this as it curves, anticlockwise, around the base of Skains Mountain. This road was still being used by vehicles 50 years ago but soon transmutes into a very obvious bridle track. Continue along this as it alternates

between being just in the trees and out on the open plain. It's a good taste of what most of the walk will be like: there is little change in elevation, magnificent views, evidence or sightings of wildlife (brumbies, foxes, feral dogs, reptiles, kangaroos and many birds), and eye-catching displays of wildflowers in spring and early summer.

An arm of Long Plain extends up McPhersons Creek and the waterway has to be crossed. Depending on recent weather, walkers may have to negotiate several small streams and waterlogged areas before reaching Mosquito Creek Fire Track. Follow this through old growth forest, with a gentle climb through Harrys Gap before dropping down to where Mosquito Creek runs out on to Gurrangorambla Flat. The open plains are favoured haunts of brumbies.

Leave the fire track before it crosses Morris Creek and follow a little used four-wheel-drive track south to Old Currango Hut (GR 506491), which is very obvious below the tree line.

This hut must be the most interesting building in the park; it's certainly the oldest, with parts constructed in the 1870s. The adze-squared verandah rafters, hand-split alpine-ash lining boards and roof shingles can still be seen. The walls of some of the rooms have been covered with a succession of sailcloth, hessian, wallpaper and newspaper. Second World War events can be read from the walls—fighting on the Russian Front, the campaign in North Africa and the RAAF bombing of Rabaul. By the late 1980s Old Currango had deteriorated to the extent that NPWS was prepared to let the building collapse and administer it as a ruin. Luckily, two clubs affiliated with KHA undertook its restoration, which was carried out over a period of ten years. The display of restoration photos, written history, and the old newspapers (under protective perspex) should be checked, as should the visitors' book.

Those staying the night should spend the last hour of daylight as many have done before: sitting on the front verandah, drink in hand, watching the sunlight leave the distant Brindabella Mountains. Firewood left by the caretaker group can be used, within reason. The bush lounge chair is reserved for the oldest bushwalker.

Day two

Distance for day two: 10.2 kilometres

The Currango Plain has to be crossed and it is tempting to cut straight across. This is not advisable: Currango Creek isn't a great obstacle but the open plain can consume both time and energy. Snow grass tussocks make the surface uneven, clumps of reeds near swamp areas are worse, low-lying areas can be waterlogged and the ever-present shrub (kunzea) is called needlebush locally.

The best route is to go back to the Mosquito Creek Fire Track, turn right and follow this for a short while. Set an easterly course near the edge of the trees on Gurrangorambla Range, but don't go out on to the open plain. Several small streams have to be crossed, usually coming out on to the plain through gaps in the trees. About three kilometres after leaving the fire track there is a small creek on the left—examine the clear country alongside. If you spot several dark clumps, about two metres high, it is worth investigating: they are the Kentish Cherries, planted as a small orchard some time before 1900. At the time it was the site of a dwelling that became known as the Cherry Garden (GR 536511).

In December 1992 more than 80 people walked into this spot to hold a centenary celebration to honour their ancestors, WH ('Argentine') Harris and family, who arrived at the Cherry Garden in 1892. The cherries were ripe—not many, but enough for a sample.

The route continues around the northern end of Currango Plain and walkers are likely to find rough tracks used by local brumbies. Old fence lines and gateways can be seen. At the base of Howells Peak, turn north and follow the tree line to pick up the Blue Waterholes Fire Track. This leads to Pocket Hut (GR 565525), another substantial building of several rooms. It was erected for the stockmen of Australian Estates, a British Company that had extensive pastoral holdings in NSW. The second night can be spent in or near this hut.

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Day three

Distance for day three, including Cave Creek excursions: 15.7 kilometres

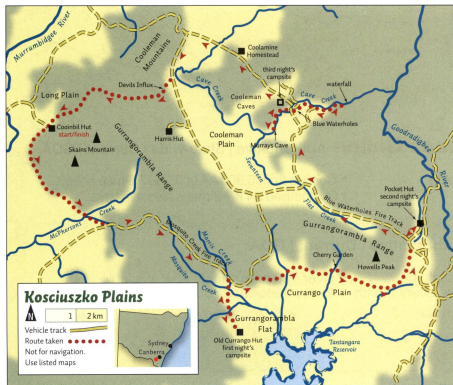
By now the watershed between the Murrumbidgee and Goodradigbee Rivers has been crossed. From Pocket Hut, the Blue Waterholes Fire Track passes through a belt of trees to emerge on to Seventeen Flat, an extension of

If there is time, one or both of the side excursions on Cave Creek should be done. Check the NPWS information display at Magpie Flat Camping Ground for details. In one direction, a one-and-a-half kilometre trip upstream along the dry creek-bed will reach Murrays Cave. A waterfall can be reached by walking 2.1 kilometres downstream through the vertical lime-

The fire track continues across Cooleman Plain: leave this when you reach the trees at the bottom of Cooleman Mountain and follow a faint four-wheel-drive track running south. This crosses numerous small watercourses running down from the forested slope of Gurrangoramba Range. After about two kilometres you will reach a larger stream valley, which may be dry. However, a gap in the trees can be seen where it reaches the bottom of the mountain.

This gap is the next destination: it is a huge, sunken doline where the roof of an underground limestone cave has fallen and is only about 400 metres from the track. Two small creeks run into this depression, known as the Devils Influx (GR 482568), and disappear to emerge as part of the Cave Creek flow at the Blue Waterholes.

From the Devils Influx, begin climbing through the sparsely forested corridor to the south. Stay out of the heavy timber while moving south-west until you find a well-used bridle track. This will take you over Gurrangoramba Range back to Cooinbil Hut. Some parts of this are steep, but much of it follows a track that allowed



Cooleman Plain. The full extent and topography of the main Cooleman Plain begins to be evident from where it is joined by Seventeen Flat Creek. Forested hills surround the plain, which is far from flat—it's treeless, several kilometres wide and has a succession of ups and downs with many incised streams, all heading towards the centre.

By the time you reach Cave Creek you will have noticed numerous rock outcrops and cliff-faces and many walkers would know that they were in limestone country. In fact, Cooleman Plain is an excellent example of karst topography, featuring limestone outcrops, dolines (depressions where the tops of cave systems have collapsed), sink-holes (where running water enters underground cave and stream systems) and above-ground cave entrances. Many millions of years ago ancient limestone beds were put down under a sea: these went through further geological stages to give the plain's distinctive features.

Cave Creek drains all of Cooleman Plain but for much of its length it is completely dry. The accumulated water emerges into a creek-bed at the Blue Waterholes, where the dry creek suddenly becomes a stream of very cold, very pure water, 15 metres wide and half a metre deep. It gets its name from a bluish tint to the water caused by dissolved chemicals.

There's a well-patronised picnic area where the creek is crossed. The designated camping area, Magpie Flat (GR 521565), is about 700 metres further along the Blue Waterholes Fire Track. Take water from Cave Creek.

stone cliffs of Clarke Gorge—the creek needs to be crossed several times. Many bushwalkers consider this to be the highlight of the entire trip.

Day four

Distance for day four: 11.7 kilometres

The route continues along the Blue Waterholes Fire Track through a mix of open plain and patches of snow-gum forest. About three kilometres from the Blue Waterholes, several buildings will be seen on the right. These are what is left of the Coolamine Homestead complex (GR 507579), a visit to which will reveal a great deal. During Christmas and Easter holidays, there is often a ranger in residence, with billy tea and damper sometimes offered here and at the Blue Waterholes.

The surrounding plains were used by pastoralists as far back as the late 1830s. By the 1880s, Frederick Campbell acquired Coolamine and the buildings were constructed. One was for his overseer, the other for Campbell and his family, who often made periodic visits by horse-drawn vehicle from his home properties of Duntroon and Yarrolumla, now part of Canberra.

At one time there were as many as ten buildings; Coolamine was a largely self-sufficient community of up to 20 people. About 30 years ago many of the buildings had disappeared, others had collapsed, and the remainder were in a sorry condition. Major restoration work, funded by the Heritage Commission, saved the remaining buildings, with further work also carried out by KHA and NPWS.



The unique wallpaper of Old Currango Hut tells of events from the Second World War.

vehicles to cross the range 70 years ago. When you judge that you have reached the top of the range (after a climb of approximately two kilometres) keep a watch for fence posts as the track passes through an old gateway. A fence line was constructed along the crest of the range to fulfil a 1902 lease condition that the lessee 'construct a 13-wire dog-proof fence around the boundary of his lease'. He did. It was 32 kilometres long and became known as the 'Thirteen Wire Fence'. Remnants remain: if found, count the wires.

After two kilometres of gentle downhill, you will reach Cooinbil Hut. 🐾

Harry Hill is a retired school principal who has spent more than 50 years bushwalking, camping and restoring huts in Kosciuszko National Park and the Hume and Howell Walking Track, as well as writing about, exploring, photographing and discovering these areas. He hopes for 20 more years of the same. In public recognition of his work, he received a lifetime membership to the KHA and an Order of Australia Medal.

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Top: Old-growth forests act as giant carbon banks, storing carbon safely out of the atmosphere. Protecting our forests will help future generations by reducing dangerous climate change.

Photo: Geoff Law



Pulping Tasmania's future?

Vica Bayley reports on pulp mill protests and court cases



Community opposition to the Gunns pulp mill proposal for Tasmania's picturesque Tamar Valley continues to grow. A public rally organised by The Wilderness Society (TWS) exceeded all expectations, with more than 11 000 people marching through the streets of Launceston. The rally also allowed the public to express its outrage at the fast-track assessment legislated by the Tasmanian Government. The approval process has a very narrow scope, no public involvement, and limited scientific scrutiny, and does not investigate the impact of the mill's appetite on the forests, water and wildlife of the northern wood-supply zone.

Despite the inadequacies of the assessment scope, a report commissioned by the government concluded that the pulp mill still failed to meet the environmental guidelines touted as the minimum benchmark. This should have been the end of the project; however, members of the Tasmanian Parliament seem set to ignore the mill's environmental failings, and their own commitments to the Tasmanian community, and approve the pulp mill.

The Federal Government must also assess aspects of the pulp mill. It, too, has adopted a basic assessment based on preliminary information provided by Gunns, without scope for public hearings and ignoring the impacts of increased

logging pressure on threatened wildlife. This process seems designed to satisfy the developer's commercial time lines rather than providing a thorough, rigorous investigation involving the public and building community confidence.

TWS took Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Gunns to the Federal Court to argue that this assessment failed to follow due process, was inadequate and flawed. The court's decision could determine whether Tasmania's future will be marred by this massive chemical blot. By mid-July, a verdict was still to come.

Meanwhile, logging in highly contentious forests and domestic water catchments continues across Tasmania's north. Scientists fear for the future of threatened species such as the Simpsons stag beetle and an even rarer relative, Bornemissza's stag beetle. Dr Peter McQuillan, Senior Lecturer in Ecosystems at the University of Tasmania, recently wrote: 'The harvesting of two tall forest areas near Blue Tier will further threaten two iconic forest animals already listed as vulnerable and endangered under the state's Threatened Species legislation. Their loss will also reduce the options for improving the conservation outcomes needed to secure the future of NE Tasmania's wonderful biodiversity.'

In the biggest public demonstration in Tasmania since the Franklin River campaign, 11 000 people marched through Launceston on 16 June to protest against the proposed pulp mill. John McLaine

Act now



TWS released a postcard featuring a massive, cable-logged slope in Launceston's water catchments aimed at Malcolm Turnbull and Labor leader Kevin Rudd. You can help to prevent climate change, protect Tasmania's water supply and wildlife by contacting these politicians and demanding that they reject the proposed pulp mill. Email kevin.rudd.mp@aph.gov.au or malcolm.turnbull.mp@aph.gov.au or phone (07) 3899 4031 or (02) 9369 5221, respectively.

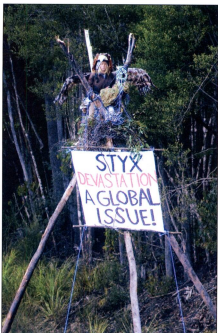
What price our forests? Broken bones and international pressure, by Ben Morrow

The ongoing destruction of Tasmania's high-conservation-value forests received international recognition at a meeting of the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in June in New Zealand. At this meeting, 21 countries voted to send a high-level mission of international experts to assess the damage and threats resulting from industrial logging adjacent to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). The Committee urged the Australian Government to add threatened forests adjacent to the TWWHA to the existing reserve system.

In May a moratorium on logging and roading operations in the whole Upper Florentine Valley was successfully negotiated, with new works

postponed until after the federal election. A blockade had been in place since November 2006, resulting in more than 20 arrests, and preventing the proposed building of ten kilometres of roads into pristine rainforest. Forestry Tasmania (FT) initiated negotiations shortly after the blockade featured prominently in a national newspaper. The election outcome and the next

In July, activists shut down access to the whole Styx Valley. In an attempt to gain access for loggers, a police officer repeatedly assaulted a forest defender. The protester was locked on to a concrete block through a vehicle's floor—he was kned in the face and his nose broken, his head was smashed into the steering wheel and his eyes gouged. The same officer later endangered



A forest protester is arrested in the Upper Florentine Valley. **Left**, a 'wedge-tailed eagle' making a point in his tripod nest in the Valley of the Giants, Styx Valley. **Both photos** Matthew Newton. **Below**, some 70 per cent of Victoria's native vegetation has been cleared. This jumps to 92 per cent on private land.

John Sampson

federal government's policy will determine the future of the moratorium, and of the valley.

FT continues to target the highest conservation-value areas of the Lower Weld Valley including southern Tasmania's largest patch of unprotected rainforest on public land on the northern side of the Weld River. In the lower reaches of the valley, a forest ecosystem indistinguishable from that protected in the TWWHA is being systematically devastated by logging.

protesters' lives by interfering with other road-block structures. Activists are pressing charges.

The return to the Tasmanian community from protecting the island's high-conservation-value forests would far outweigh the negligible economic returns from their clear-felling. As Australia faces a future constrained by water shortages and a low-carbon economy, governments must manage our natural environment in a way that values all the roles they play.

Crunch time for Victoria's native plants and animals

We've got one last chance to prevent extinctions. Victoria Naturally spokesperson John Sampson elaborates

An alliance of eight environmental groups is warning that an inquiry into the health of Victoria's biodiversity could be the last chance to save a range of species from extinction. The first stage of the Victorian Government's Land and Biodiversity White Paper drew more than 350 submissions, with many expressing fears about pests and weeds, habitat loss, threatened species, climate change effects and the increasing threat of bushfire.

Since European settlement, Victoria has suffered massive habitat loss, with around 70 per cent of its native vegetation cleared. CSIRO

figures show that 44 per cent of the state's native plants and 30 per cent of its animals are either extinct or 'officially threatened'. The added pressures of climate change, invasive weeds and feral animals are pushing Victoria's native animals towards extinction.

The Victoria Naturally alliance wants the White Paper to produce tough measures to reverse this biodiversity crisis. It is calling for a massive funding boost from the state government for habitat restoration on private and public land in order to create the large, connecting wildlife corridors needed to give the state's plants and animals room to adapt to climate change.

Submissions to the first stage of the White Paper will be used to draw up a draft Green

Paper, which is expected to be released for public comment in January 2008. The final White Paper is expected in November next year. Submissions have been posted at www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper

Act now

To keep up to date with the White Paper inquiry and help to pressure the Victorian Government into taking tough action, join Victoria Naturally's e-bulletin by emailing your name to info@vnpa.org.au For more information, go to www.vnnpa.org.au and click on the Victoria Naturally link.

Best chance ever to **save** our river red gum wetlands

In July the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) handed down draft proposals for the management of the unique red gum forests that line 1600 kilometres of the Murray River, from South Australia to Lake Hume. VEAC recommends the creation of four new national parks—Barmah, Gunbower, Lower Goulburn River and Leaghur-Koorangie—as well as exclusion of grazing from public land and a 70 per cent reduction in logging. Other recommendations include establishing Aboriginal co-management for Barmah State Forest and recovering 4000 gigalitres of water for environmental floods every five years.

Victoria's river red gum forests are home to almost 300 threatened and endangered plants and animals, as well as ongoing Aboriginal culture. They provide feeding areas for migratory birds and nesting sites for hundreds of thousands of waterbirds, and also act as water filters and carbon stores. However, VEAC found that up to three-quarters of our river red gums are stressed, dead or dying, with logging, grazing and lack of flooding putting red gum survival at risk.

Environment groups welcomed VEAC's 'excellent recommendations' while suggesting the government should go further. Farming and logging groups slammed the proposals, claiming their implementation would lead to job losses and further pest, weed and bushfire problems.

Act now

For more information on the river red gum forests, please visit: www.redgum.org.au. There is a link to the VEAC web site, from where submissions on the Draft Proposals Paper can be made until 21 September.

Anvil Hill the tip of the coal-export iceberg



The message, written in bodies, says it all. *Greenpeace*

Saving our natural heritage, or our industry, by Georgina Woods

On 3 June, hundreds of people gathered at Anvil Hill in the Hunter region for a weekend-long protest against the establishment of an open-cut coalmine in the area. On the final day, their bodies spelt out a message to the New South Wales Government, 'Save Anvil Hill'. Days later, NSW Minister for Planning Frank Sartor gave approval for the construction of the controversial mine, resulting in an immediate public outcry.

Anvil Hill has become a symbol of our growing awareness of the need to tackle climate change at the very root of our economic and social customs. Campaigners, activists and locals opposed to the mine have indicated that their efforts at Anvil Hill will continue, regardless of the government's decision. In August, the Federal Court will hear the Anvil Hill Project Watch Association's arguments that the Common-

wealth had a responsibility to assess the proposal because of the mine's contribution to climate change and the resulting implications for World Heritage Areas such as the Great Barrier Reef and Blue Mountains Wilderness Area.

John Merson, Executive Director of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, warned in 2004 that bushfire frequency in the Blue Mountains could double as a result of climate change, saying that it would be 'very difficult for the eucalypt forests and the various species that operate in these longer cycles to regenerate' if fires became too frequent. The connection between the coal dug and sold from Anvil Hill and our commitment to protecting World Heritage and other unique Australian environments is a logical one, but governments don't always behave logically. It remains to be seen whether legal and community pressure will prevail and deliver the transition away from economic dependence on the coal industry that is long overdue.

Emirates Blue Mountains Resort approved

Andrew Cox reports that a proposed five-star resort on the western edge of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in the Wolgan Valley has received State and Federal Government approval

Key concerns about the plan for the Emirates Resort were: establishing a fenced native wildlife sanctuary will isolate part of the Gardens of Stone National Park; resort buildings would be within Wollemi National Park; water from Wolgan River would be used; bushwalker access to the

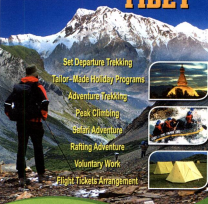
Glow Worm Tunnel needed to be maintained; and other bushland needed protection.

While approving the resort proposal in a national park creates an alarming precedent for the future, the NSW Government conceded it was 'an extra-ordinary circumstance which is unlikely to be repeated in other national parks in NSW'.

Following negotiations with Colong Foundation for Wilderness and the NSW National Parks Association (NPA), Emirates and the government agreed to: guarantee public access to landlocked parts of the Gardens of Stone

National Park and the Glow Worm Tunnel from the Wolgan Valley; transfer Emirates-owned crown land outside the resort area to national park; guarantee base flows to the Wolgan River; establish an expert panel chaired by the NSW Department of Environment & Climate Change to oversee the wildlife conservancy; ban horse riding in the National Park; undertake public consultation on an amendment to the Plan of Management before constructing the feral-proof fence for the wildlife conservancy; and review public involvement and transparency in future national park leasing processes in NSW.

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NSW public-land clear out and land-clearing loopholes



For sale: taxpayers' land for developers' profits, by Andrew Cox

The NSW Government's plans to sell off or develop public lands harbouring high-quality bushland and open space are rapidly advancing. Environmental groups' long-running campaign to halt the sale of 6000 Crown leases covering more than one million hectares reached a critical point in July.

The Department of Lands originally proposed the Crown lease fire sale in April 2004. This was delayed after initial public concerns forced conservation assessments to take place, resulting in covenants being placed on areas with high-conservation-value bushland before the leases were sold for a small price.

In July the sell-off began. Key NSW environmental groups, led by NPA and supported by Total Environment Centre, Colong Foundation for Wilderness and TWS, have slammed as inadequate the measures taken to protect conservation values. The covenants fail to protect the conservation values properly, and key areas will not remain in public ownership.

Elsewhere the Department of Lands has adopted a new policy of fully exploring all economic options for vacant crown lands and reserves, particularly on the coast. So far this has led to controversial proposals for an expanded marina, restaurants and five-storey apartments on waterfront parkland at Coffs Harbour Jetty, an 'ecotourism facility' including serviced apartments, a conference centre and sports centre at Killalea State Park at Shellharbour, south of Wollongong, and the redevelopment of Ulladulla Harbour.

Many small areas of crown land adjacent to coastal national parks are also being closely scrutinised for their development potential.

Environmental and community groups are currently collecting all examples of public bushland for sale and development as part of an escalating campaign to require public lands to be managed for the public interest, not sold to developers.

Renegade farmers chop at land-clearing laws

The land-clearing laws in NSW and Queensland have recently been under pressure on several fronts. Renegade farmers across north-west NSW and south-east Queensland have promised to chop down one tree each day on their properties, starting on 1 July and doubling daily, to protest the clearing rules. By the end of the month, they would have to cut down one billion trees in a day! NSW Greens MLC, Ian Cohen, says this irrational response will destroy the reputation of conservation-minded farmers and that nobody has the automatic right to destroy important environmental areas.

This will be a important test for the incoming NSW Minister responsible for native vegetation, Phil Koperberg, Minister for Climate Change, Environment & Water. A second test will be whether the government delivers on its long-awaited promise to close off a major loophole in its land-clearing laws and create rules for logging on private land. Logging companies have been exploiting the loophole, logging rainforests, riverside vegetation and old-growth trees with little scrutiny. Most of these practices were banned on public lands more than 25 years ago.

The NSW Government promised to close the loophole by the end of June 2007, yet its start was recently stalled for another month. At the time of publication, we were still waiting for its implementation.

Macquarie Island— World Heritage under threat



Left, A sooty albatross chick comes face to face with its introduced neighbour.

Below, a young chick was crushed in its nest due to this landslide.

Both photos
Rowan Trebilco

Helen Thomas-Joyce elaborates on the pest problem and planned solution

Macquarie Island is a remote subantarctic island in the Southern Ocean, 1500 kilometres south-south-east of Tasmania. It has World Heritage status and is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Its rugged coasts are home to vast numbers of seals and seabirds, especially penguins, during breeding seasons.

However, Macquarie Island's World Heritage status is under threat, with reports of the worst levels of environmental damage of the last century. Few areas remain to indicate the once pristine nature of the coastal landscape. An explosion in rabbit numbers is the cause of the destruction, with the population now between 100 000 and 150 000. Feral cats were eradicated in 2000, giving rabbits, black rats and house mice a stranglehold on the island. Pests have led to the extinction of two endemic terrestrial birds, the Macquarie Island rail and parakeet.

The island is 34 kilometres in length and there are 21 sites that have been identified as experiencing significant—extreme damage from rabbits. Hills, once abundant with lush green vegetation, are brown and barren. The tussock grass and island cabbage are killed by the grazing, destroying the breeding habitat of some seabirds. Rats and mice inhibit the growth of plant seedlings and are a threat to seabird chicks and eggs.

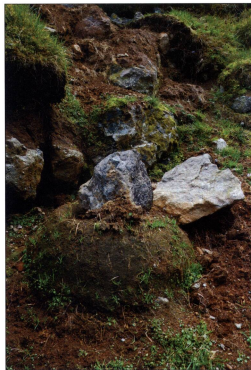
A significant landslide occurred in September 2006 and is believed to have caused the death

of hundreds of king penguins and chicks. Long-time observers on the island believe such landslides are due to degradation caused by rabbits.

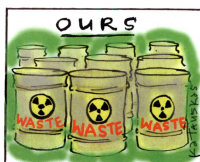
A detailed eradication plan for the rabbits, rats and mice was prepared in 2004–05. However, the necessary \$24.6 million funding was not committed until June this year. The Tasmanian Government initially wiped its hands of the issue and pushed for Commonwealth funding. It took more than 12 months, and significant lobbying from conservation groups, for the Tasmanian and Federal Governments to reach an agreement to share the costs.

The plan has been described as 'a lethally efficient military operation'. During its first phase, expected to begin in winter 2009, helicopters will distribute poison in the form of cereal-based pellets. This will eradicate the rats and mice and more than 95 per cent of the rabbits. In the second stage, hunting teams on the ground will eradicate surviving rabbits using techniques including shooting, trapping, fumigating burrows and the use of dogs. The field teams will remain on the island for four years to ensure that there is no longer a breeding population.

At least 22 bird species are expected to benefit from the eradication operation, with 12 of these considered threatened. However, four bird species are at risk from the use of helicopters and bait. The poison will also pollute lakes, pools and streams on the island. It is feared that the areas at present untouched by rabbit



grazing will be destroyed before the eradication plan gets under way in two years' time. The island's landscape will take many years to recover once the rodents are gone, and some areas may never recover.



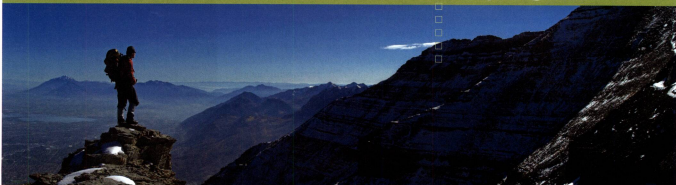
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Forests role in reducing climate change

Chris Baxter reports on The Wilderness Society's initiative to combat climate change

In a presentation to supporters in Melbourne in June, TWS outlined its plans to highlight the role of forest protection in combating climate change. Professor Brendan Mackey of the Australian National University reminded listeners that the debate about dealing with global warming has concentrated on reducing greenhouse gas emissions while overlooking the role of forests.

Tree clearing and logging have a 'double whammy' effect: they not only contribute to global warming by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, but also prevent forests from fulfilling their role as carbon stores. If left standing, forests absorb carbon dioxide and convert it into carbon, safely stored in vegetation and in the ground.

Every year land clearing in Australia—most of it in Queensland—produces 58.9 million tonnes of greenhouse emissions, the equivalent of adding 14.4 million cars to our roads. In addition, the logging of native forests, primarily in Tasmania, produces 33.5 million tonnes of greenhouse emissions per annum, the equivalent of adding 8.2 million cars to our roads.

TWS concludes that, as part of a package of solutions to fixing climate change, federal and state governments must protect trees and native bushland. TWS argues that this will provide a guaranteed, cost-effective and immediate reduction in greenhouse gas pollution.

What's in a name?

A great deal when the word in question is 'wilderness', writes Geoff Mosley

Wilderness is the most precious thing we have. But the fight is not only to protect those wilderness areas set aside, but also for the survival of the word. A crunch time is looming at the international level (and perhaps in Australia) as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) reviews its protected areas system.

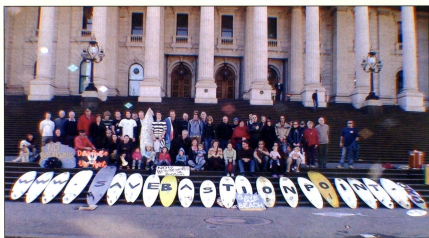
This system of six management categories was published in 1994. This measure certainly helped expand the world's protected areas—by 2003, the '1b Wilderness' category encompassed 1302 sites totalling 1 015 512 square kilometres. The current review of the categories began in 2004 and will be completed at the World Conservation Congress in 2008. One option that has been raised is to replace all category names with numbers. This would be a great pity because these names have been very helpful in explaining each category's distinctive management objectives.

Misleading and prejudicial comments about the term 'wilderness' have emerged from the

review process. It has been claimed that calling land wilderness implies it is pristine, and since all parts of the environment have been modified in some way there can be no wilderness. However, the aim is to select those areas least modified and protect them so that they evolve in response to natural forces and processes as far as possible.

Another misleading claim is that wilderness represents land without people or cultural significance. Finally, there is the highly inaccurate claim that retaining biodiversity requires human manipulation of land. The struggle to retain 'wilderness' as a reserve category name is going well but we must be vigilant.

Woodchips



The Mallacoota community delivers their message to the Victorian Parliament. Neil Lazarow

Firing up the generators with Victoria's forests

As the demand for Australia's native forest woodchips continues to fall due to the strength of the dollar, plantation substitution and increasing environmental awareness, the logging industry is desperately searching for new markets. And it may have found one in the most unlikely place. The Bracks Government's proposed renewable energy regulations, before parliament in July, allow the burning of native forests for electricity generation. The logging industry may be able to log old-growth forests and water catchments, incinerate them and describe the electricity as renewable.

Every other mainland state in Australia has ruled out this alarming new industry, as did Premier Bracks in a pre-election promise in 2002. If the proposal goes ahead in Victoria, the future of the woodchipping industry will be as secure as ever. Contact TWS's Victorian Forest Campaigner to find out how you can help: luke.chamberlain@wilderness.org.au

Dynamite infrastructure for Mallacoota community?

Megan Clinton reports that the Environmental Effects Statement for the proposed boat-ramp upgrade and breakwater construction at Bastion Point, near Mallacoota, was released in June. Economist Simon O'Connor says that the document's economic calculations are questionable while the social benefits associated with the project are highly inflated.


Bastion Point is part of an outstanding wilderness coastline. The point is surrounded by Croajingolong National Park, a world biosphere reserve, with Cape Howe Marine

National Park to its east. The construction will require the dynamiting of a 20 metre hole in the reef and will have immediate and long-term effects on the coast and marine environment. Once it is built, the area will be dredged day and night throughout the year. To protest the inappropriate development, a group of surfers and members of the Mallacoota community marched on Parliament House. They delivered a surfboard covered in signatures with the request that it be tabled in parliament in protest. For more information, go to www.savebastionpoint.org

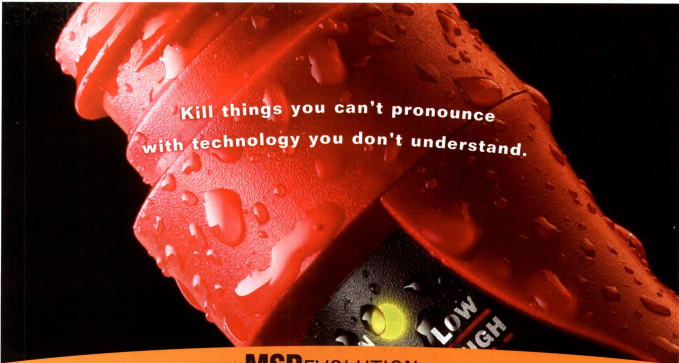
New Zealand the smart country, again

The July edition of *The Colong Bulletin* reported that New Zealand is aiming to be carbon neutral by 2020. Energy efficiency measures will be used to reduce emissions, with forestry offsets purchased to cover the remainder. A major New Zealand power company, Meridian Energy, has been certified as carbon neutral, while another energy supplier, Carbon Energy, will invest \$2 billion in wind and geothermal power products.

Wild founders recognised

In recognition of their outstanding contributions to conservation in Australia, Wild Publications founders Chris Baxter and Brian Walters were presented with life memberships of The Wilderness Society in June. It was the first time TWS had given out such an award. This inaugural presentation recognised 16 people. 

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au



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C'mon baby light my fire

John Wilde tries to set the night on fire while surveying stoves for bushwalking

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 75.)

RECENTLY, MY WIFE AND I HEADED OFF FOR A trek in Ladakh, northern India. The whole walk was well above the tree line. On the first night, we found a small flat spot in the rocky terrain and decided to make camp. Looking forward to that first cup of tea and a hot meal, I was nonplussed to find that our stove wouldn't work. Close inspection revealed it to have a terminal complaint, rendering it useless.

The following morning, we decided to press on, using local fuel. There were plenty of yaks about, which meant lots of dung! We soon learnt that yak dung creates an unpleasant odour that permeates all food and water. There are good reasons why the local people use petrol or kero stoves!

This brief story explains why your stove will quickly become one of your most treasured (or most cursed) possessions in the bush. Given the shortage of yaks in Australia, and the impact of wood fires, a good, lightweight stove is a must for any bush lover.

There are three stove types covered in this survey, burning alcohol (methylated spirits), gas (butane, propane or high-altitude mixes) or petroleum derivatives (Shellite, unleaded petrol, kerosene). Perhaps your first job in choosing a stove is to make a list of your intended activities and destinations. Each fuel has advantages and disadvantages, and this list will help to narrow down your options.

A maximum of three models from each manufacturer have been included in the survey, although many more may be available.



cheap. They also have a minimum of parts and are hard to damage. The main drawback of these stoves is that alcohol is one of the least efficient fuels: it is slow to cook with, and you consequently need to carry more. Performance also deteriorates drastically in the cold or at altitude, and heat control is usually quite basic. Alcohol stoves are also on the bulky side when the complete set is carried.

Gas stoves are particularly popular for shorter trips as they are relatively safe, easy to use and to light. The fuel comes in a variety of mixes to suit everything from general camping to high-altitude use and heat control is usually easy and effective. The disadvantages of this stove type include the inconvenience and expense of carrying a number of cylinders on longer trips, the difficulty of telling how much fuel is left,

Gillian Wilde makes sure that she has a stove for all occasions. John Wilde. **Left**, the descriptively named MSR Simmerlite, with fuel bottle.

and the waste created (most cylinders are not recyclable). Most canisters are resealable—removing the stove head will not release the gas. However, this is not always the case. Gas stoves are a great solution for short, lightweight trips where minimal time will be spent cooking.

Recent advances in design have resulted in integrated pot and stove units, such as the Jet-boil range. Although this stove style has limitations for more complicated cooking tasks, the units have drastically increased fuel efficiency and reduced boiling times.

Petroleum stoves are generally fast and efficient. These stoves are particularly popular for



Fuel type

For many years, alcohol-burning stoves have been enormously popular—and with good reason. Alcohol is one of the most reliable, quietest and safest fuels to use, and the stoves are simple and easy to use. They usually come with everything you need (pots, windshield and more), making the entire set-up comparatively

longer trips, and are well suited to cold or high-altitude destinations. Heat control varies—some are better than others. Disadvantages include the volatility of the fuel and the need to prime the stove (preheat it before it will burn properly). Good ventilation is also necessary, and some stoves require a lot of maintenance (for example, new seals at regular intervals) or have parts that can easily be damaged. Depending on the type of burner they use, they are also often noisy.

The most popular and clean burning petroleum derivative is Shellite—basically purified petrol. Some stoves will also run on standard unleaded, diesel or kerosene, which can be an

advantage in countries where purified fuels are not available. However, these fuels are more likely to clog up your stove. Kerosene and diesel are normally only used in lightweight, multifuel stoves if there isn't an alternative, and may require a change of burner jet.

As alluded to above, fuel availability differs overseas. Alcohol can be difficult to find in Third World countries, except for South America. Appropriate gas canisters may not be available, so do your research before you leave.

Empty fuel bottles should be thoroughly washed and aired before travel, but even then some airlines may refuse to carry them. Check the latest regulations with your airlines before flying. For Australia, the best bet is www.casa.gov.au/dg/luggage/dgtable.htm. If flying with a gas stove, canisters must not be taken but airlines are unlikely to quibble over the stove head itself.



Tips for use

1. Where provided, use a windshield. Do not use home-made shields around gas stoves as this may cause the fuel container to overheat.
2. Use a heat transfer device or reflector if your stove allows it.
3. In snow or on soft ground, use a small piece of board to ensure your stove does not tip over.
4. Avoid contaminating fuel, and keep any connecting parts of the stove as clean as possible.
5. Don't let your food boil over—this can clog jets.
6. Cover the stove when it is not in use. In particular, gas stoves can be hard to light when the jet is full of water.
7. Use the recommended fuel bottles and storage containers for all fuels and make sure they are clearly marked, as fuel is potentially dangerous and is often corrosive.
8. Before a trip, check that your stove works. Regular lubrication with silicone grease can prevent washers and O-rings from drying out.
9. Carry a stove-servicing kit if your stove is of a more complicated variety. Most manufacturers offer a kit as an added extra.
10. When using an alcohol stove, make sure the flame is completely extinguished before refilling the fuel burner. The flame can be hard to spot and this has led to some bad accidents. Ideally, wait until the stove is cool before refilling.



The Jetboil GPS is an integrated pot and stove system, increasing cooking efficiency. **Above left**, the Trangia T25-1 kit and caboodle. **Below**, the Primus OmniFuel Stove burns just about everything, including gas.

Solid-fuel stoves using hexamine tablets may be available, but are usually only used in emergencies by institutions such as the army.

Yak dung is not recommended!

Dimensions

The size of the stove as given by the manufacturer. In some cases, including alcohol stoves and the Jetboil, the dimensions shown include cooking pots.

Buy right

- Before buying a stove, take into consideration a number of factors: where you will be walking, who will be using the stove, what you plan to cook, weight requirements and personal fuel preferences.
- Trying a stove before you buy is a good idea. Not many sales people will let you light a stove in the shop, so try to use a friend's or talk to experienced outdoor people.
- Schools and other groups might prefer stoves that burn gas or alcohol, happily sacrificing some efficiency for safety, while Himalayan trips may call for top-of-the-line, multifuel systems. Alcohol or gas stoves will be perfect for most people on short trips, but those interested in longer walks should consider petroleum stoves. Keen travellers, especially those intending to visit countries where fuel availability is an issue (particularly Central Asia, China and Eastern Europe), should also think about petroleum stoves.

Stove weight

These were provided by the manufacturer and relate to the burner only, unless otherwise specified. Some alcohol stoves include the weight of a full set of billys, a pot holder and flame adjuster, while the Jetboil also includes a pot. Most stoves come with a carry case or bag, the weight of which was not included.

Fuel tank weight

All stoves have a separate fuel canister or bottle, with the exception of the Coleman Exponent Feather. Most gas stoves use a 360 gram canister. However, some weigh as much as 500 grams, and a 170 gram canister is available for the Jetboil. The weight of these has been standardised, taking into account the weight of a full gas canister. For petroleum and alcohol, the capacity of fuel bottles can vary from 300 millilitres to one litre, with the most common size being 650 millilitres. Where possible I have standardised fuel bottles to 600–650 millilitres.

Fuel weight and total weight

There will be big variations in fuel consumption depending on what you cook. If you are re-hydrating freeze-dried food, boiling noodles or operating in the tropics, you will use surprisingly little fuel. There is no hard-and-fast rule here;



Stoves

	Fuel type	Dimensions, millimetres	Stove weight, grams	Fuel tank weight, grams	Fuel weight, grams	Total weight for two days, grams	Hose	Fuel tank, type	Boiling time, minutes	Stability	Heat control	Quietness	Value	Comments	Aspires price, \$
Campingaz China www.campinggaz.com															
Bluelet	G	180 x 90 x 90	290	280	Inc	570	N	Clip	7	● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●●	Gas cylinder non-resealable	40
Twister 270 HP2	G	140 x 120 x 120	285	360	Inc	645	N	Screw	3:20	●●	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Needs specific: Campingaz cylinder; piezo ignition	65
Coleman China www.colemanaustralia.com.au †															
Exponent Feather	S U	150 x 120 x 120	680	Inc	220	900	N	Integral	3:30	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	Fold-out feet for stability; needs extra fuel bottle for longer trips	170
Exponent Apex	K U	100 x 100 x 250	520	155	220	895	Y	Bottle	3:30	●●●	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Built-in windshield; fold-out feet for stability	190
Gasmate China www.sitro.com.au															
Backpacker Stove	G	90 x 90 x 120	200	360	Inc	560	N	Screw	4:20	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Cheapest stove in survey	30
Backpacker Stove with windshield and piezo	G	125 x 125 x 115	280	360	Inc	640	N	Screw	4:20	●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	Built-in windshield; piezo ignition	50
Jetboil USA www.jetboil.com															
Jetboil PCS	G	180 x 104 x 104	425	170	Inc	595	N	Screw	2 mins for 500 ml max	●	●●●	●●●	●●	Integral system, with 0.5 litre pot included for fast boiling; needs extra cookware for frying	170
Jetboil GPS	G	175 x 110 x 110	540	330	Inc	870	N	Screw	4	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Efficient group cooking system; 1.5 litre pot included	230
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au															
Arcus	G	35 x 48 x 60	155	360	Inc	515	N	Screw	4:10	● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●●	Piezo ignition; expensive for features	110
Kovea South Korea www.kovea.com															
XT Solo	G	57 x 57 x 100	125	360	Inc	485	N	Screw	4:50	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Piezo ignition; stable; compact	55
Titanium	G	67 x 38 x 81	90	360	Inc	450	N	Screw	3:10	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●●●	Titanium construction	85
Moonwalker	G	92 x 80 x 115	340	360	Inc	700	Y	Screw	3:05	●● ^{1/2}	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Windshield; piezo ignition; preheating system; high output but simmers	100
MSR South Korea/USA www.msrcorp.com															
Pocket Rocket	G	102 x 50 x 50	85	360	Inc	445	N	Screw	3:20	●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Ultra light and fast	70
Simmerlite	S U	80 x 120 x 90	240	140	220	600	Y	Bottle	3:10	●● ^{1/2}	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	Windshield	215
XGK-EX	D K S U	102 x 85 x 90	375	140	220	735	Y	Bottle	2:10	●●●	●●	●	●●●	Mountaineering stove; windshield; shaker jet cleaner; fast and loud; burns many fuels	270
Optimus Sweden www.optimus.se															
Crux	G	84 x 57 x 31	85	360	Inc	445	N	Screw	3	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Tiny, can fit into the hollow at the bottom of a gas canister	160
Nova	D G O P S U	86 x 135 x 65	420	130	220	770	Y	Bottle	3:20	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●● ^{1/2}	Jet can be cleaned while burning; simmers	295
Primus Sweden www.primus.se †															
Micron Stove	G	75 x 50 x 85	115	360	Inc	475	N	Screw	3:20	●	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Small size; high power; slightly unstable	150
OmniFuel Stove	D G O P S U	150 x 88 x 85	540	130	220	890	Y	Bottle	3:20	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	Preheating system; burns gas and liquid fuel	240
Snowpeak Japan www.snowpeak.co.jp															
Gigapower Auto	G	46 x 37 x 88	105	360	Inc	465	N	Screw	3:30	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Auto-ignition	145
Tatonka Vietnam www.tatonka.com															
Multi Stove	A	215 x 215 x 105	1140	130	480	1750	N	Bottle	11	●●●●	●	●●●●	●●●	Kit includes two pots, frypan/lid, windshield, burner and lifters	120
Trangia Sweden www.trangia.se															
Gas Insert	G	85 x 85 x 70	230	360	Inc	590/1690	Y	Screw	5	●●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	Can be used in most Trangia systems or on its own	110
T 25-1 Aluminium	A	220 x 220 x 105	1100	130	480	1710	N	Bottle	11	●●●●	●	●●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Kit includes two pots, frypan/lid, windshield, burner and lifters	120

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Fuel type:** Alcohol (methylated spirits), Diesel, Gas, Kerosene, Oil, Paraffin, Shellite, Unleaded petrol **Dimensions:** approximate length x width x height in most compact form **Stove weight:** includes minimum equipment needed to operate stove **Fuel tank weight:** Included as part of the stove; for gas stoves this figure is the weight of a full canister **Fuel weight:** adequate for two people on two-day trip, included in fuel tank weight **Total weight for two days:** total weight of stove, bottles and fuel for two people for two days **Hose:** Yes, No **Fuel tank type:** aluminium **Bottle, Clip:** gas cartridge that clips to stove, **Integral:** tank is part of stove, **Screw:** gas cartridge screws on to stove **Trangia:** for the Gas Insert, price is for burner only. Two-day weight is for burner only/for burner with kit † not seen by surveyor **The country** listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

only experience will help. As a guide, I've allowed around 50 grams (70 millilitres) of Shellite, 50 grams of gas or 100 grams (150 millilitres) of methylated spirits per person per day, and added a ten per cent buffer. The amount of fuel included should easily last two people for two

days, given fairly typical use. At least double this amount of fuel will be needed if melting snow or sterilising water.

A stove's total weight is the most important figure to consider as it isn't much use without a fuel tank or fuel! Gas stoves are usually the

lightest for short trips, followed by Shellite, multifuel and alcohol stoves.

Fuel tank type

Most gas canisters are resealable, screwing on to the stove. The Bluelet is not and has a 'clip'

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attachment. 'Bottle' tanks consist of an external bottle which attaches to the stove by a hose, while the integral tank of the Coleman model cannot be removed.

Boiling time

The figure is supplied by the manufacturer. Unless otherwise stated, this relates to the amount of time needed to boil a litre of water at low altitude. In the real world, many factors can influence how long this takes, including altitude, wind speed and ambient temperature.

Stability

This subjective rating measures the stability of the stoves. Some stoves have wide bases, making them less likely to tip over and spill food. This applies to both alcohol burners in the survey. Some of the gas stoves are only balanced on the cylinder itself, and can be quite unstable unless an extra foot attachment is provided. Petrol stoves vary, but a separate fuel bottle on a hose often stabilises the unit.

Heat control

The amount of temperature modulation available is shown in this subjective rating. Stoves with a wider burner area usually allow more precise heat control, which is better for general cooking. In general, gas stoves have superior modulation to most liquid-fuel stoves, although some of the petroleum stoves are also good.

Quietness

Some of the petroleum stoves, such as the MSR XGK, are capable of destroying all camp conversation—although at least you know when the stove is burning. The alcohol stoves are by far the quietest.


Value

This subjective rating was determined by the price of the stove in relation to its suitability for general bushwalking. More specialised use or precise requirements (for example, a stove for alpine use or lightweight walking) would necessarily alter these ratings.

Comments

Other important features.

Price

This is a rough guide based on prices found in retail shops. The actual price may vary from outlet to outlet. 

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Brunton		www.brunton.com
OSG	OSG Australia	www.osg.com.au

John Wilde has spent the last 35 years teaching outdoor education. He recently retired to spend more time adventuring and travelling with family and friends. He is a keen white-water and sea paddler, bushwalker and cross-country skier. He has been a regular contributor to Wild since the first issue.

This survey was refereed by Greg Caire.



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Sleeping beauty

Jim Graham looks at lightweight sleeping mats to make nights in the bush a joy

A GOOD NIGHT'S REST HAS NEVER BEEN AS important as on the night after a long day on the track. After all, it's when we rest that muscle tension decreases, waste products are removed and energy stores are replenished, all of which influence how well we perform on the remaining adventure days. Warmth and comfort are key to sleeping well, but choosing the right sleeping bag seems to draw most attention, with little consideration given to purchasing a good sleeping mat. However, scientific testing has shown that we lose relatively more of our body heat to the ground

than to the outside air—thus reducing the amount of heat lost to the ground is critical. The fill material in sleeping bags compresses under body weight, negating its heat-retaining capabilities, making a mat's insulation value very important to warmth. Couple this with

Some people can sleep anywhere! Scoot Williams settles for/on a pile of dry bags as he crosses a very still Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania. Mike Martyn

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of Wild Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of Wild, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. Wild Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by Wild's editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and Wild, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

the body-cradling effect of a good mat, and the importance of selecting a mat that matches our physiological characteristics and environmental conditions becomes apparent.

For the record, the author is a male in his early 40s, of average height and build (178 centimetres and 82 kilograms) with the arthritic aches and pains felt by many. This is important

survey. Basic closed-cell foam mats have not been included.

Dimensions, other sizes and shapes

The first column in the table shows the maximum length, width and inflated thickness of each full-length mat, as provided by suppliers. Most are also available in a shorter version to

Insulating material

Possibly the biggest changes in lightweight mat design is in the insulating materials. Some mats use open-cell foam cored out vertically, horizontally, or even both in combination, pro-

Buy right

- **Length:** determine whether you could be comfortable on a short mat. Generally side sleepers can adapt to short mats by tucking up their knees. Those who sleep on their back or front may be comfortable with clothing under their legs, but this is not effective in very cold conditions. Short mats are lighter and have smaller packed volume than full-length mats.
- **Thickness:** in your preferred sleeping position, try a fully inflated mat on a hard floor. If you can feel the hardness or coldness of the floor, move up to a thicker mat. Snow conditions will also require thicker mats.
- **Shape:** consider your preferred sleeping position to decide whether a tapered rectangular or mummy shape would fit your needs. These shapes will usually save weight and volume.
- **Packed volume:** mats are best carried inside a rucksack where they are less likely to be damaged. Check the rolled-up dimensions to ensure that a short-listed model will fit inside your pack.
- **Accessories:** not all products come with a stuff sack and repair kit. Add up the total cost before making a final decision.
- **Construction:** check the quality of seams, materials and valves. Some plastic valves cannot be replaced.
- **Warranty:** check what is covered by the manufacturer's warranty.



as it gives some reference for the comfort ratings in the table. These were determined by the author after he had thoroughly tried out each product. Some products were field tested, while others have been compared with reference models in more controlled urban conditions. I sleep on my side and am able to tuck my knees up and use short mats that may not suit some people's normal sleeping positions.

Recent research and development have led to some exciting new products that excel in all of the critical areas—warmth, comfort and weight. These advances have enabled the author to set an upper weight limit of 1500 grams for this

save weight, while some also have women-specific variants that are shorter and lighter than the standard models.

Manufacturers have traditionally produced straight-sided rectangular mats with very similar dimensions, well suited to Mr Average. Modern designs use tapered shapes, the dimensions of which match the body's prone profile, with height variations available. A tapered rectangular mat is slightly narrower at the foot than the shoulder, while a mummy mat has heavily tapered sides and narrows significantly at the feet. Depending on your typical sleeping position, these tapered shapes may or may not be suitable. An advantage of tapered mats is that they reduce the amount of material required and usually result in lighter, more compact products.

Weight

Variation in final product weights is typical with most equipment: if weight is of paramount importance, ensure that the models on your short list are compared on a properly calibrated scale. The weights listed were provided by manu-

facturers as average product weights without stuff sacks or repair kits. Some products are impressively light and compact, even in full-length models. The short mats are unbeatable for low weight and volume.

Surface fabric

Relatively recent improvements to self-inflating mats are the use of non-slip fabrics to stop the base slipping on the floor, and textured ripstop patterns in the mat's upper surface to improve durability and the effectiveness of repairs. These features are worthwhile developments on more traditional fabric designs.

The EPE Shaped Cored Regular mat—such a catchy name! Below left, although it looks like an old-school lilo, the Exped Downmat 7 Regular has the comfort of down fill, and comes with a stuff sack that doubles as a mat inflater.

ducing significant savings with minimal compromises in comfort. Different foam densities are used in some models, with the key weight-bearing areas, such as the torso, having denser foam than that under the legs. Other models forgo foam and partially fill the air chambers with insulating materials typically found in sleeping bags—synthetic or down fill. These models provide impressive warmth and comfort. The author was privileged to field test a down-filled sleeping mat on his most recent bushwalk and enjoyed the most comfortable night in a tent that he can recall.

Cold conditions

The table provides a subjective rating for how well the sleeping mat can be expected to insulate you from the cold earth while sleeping below the snowline. The author found that the best mats were those using synthetic or down fill, which were also thicker and more comfortable than those relying solely on open-cell foams. For the foam mats, the thicker the better in terms of insulation properties. Heavily cored mats felt slightly colder than less perforated versions although the effect wasn't as significant as for foam thickness. While sleeping curled up, shorter mats were only slightly colder than full-length mats. However, in a fully extended position significant warmth is lost from the lower legs and feet. Some people place clothing beneath their legs to compensate, but I would prefer to pay the slight weight penalty to ensure comfort. There's not much worse than cold feet!

Snow conditions

Sleeping on snow and ice tests insulation properties to the limit and I would not recommend the thinner models (2.5 centimetres and less) in this survey for use in snow conditions. Those with the highest ratings in the previous category were so good that they are the only options I would consider for use in extreme cold. For use in the snow, shorter models could only be recommended for very short adults, children, or those who sleep on their side.

Comfort

The author found little variation in comfort between open-cell foam mats of similar shape and dimensions. Once again, the thicker mats

Lightweight sleeping mats

	Dimensions, length x width, x thickness, centimetres	Weight, grams	Other sizes available	Weight of short mat, grams	Shape	Surface fabric	Insulating material	Cold conditions	Snow conditions	Comfort	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Black Wolf Taiwan www.blackwolf.com.au													
Lightweight Full	183 x 51 x 3.8	825	Short	540	TR	Ripstop polyester upper, non-slip base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●●	●●●	●●●		110
Standard Full	183 x 51 x 4.5	1180	Short	750	R	Brushed polyester upper, non-slip base	As above	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●		125
DMH China www.dmh.aust.com													
Lightweight Long	183 x 51 x 2.5	1060	Short	705	R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	Open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●		80
Standard Long	183 x 51 x 3.8	1325	Short	855	R	As above	As above	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	Short version is heaviest short mat in survey	100
EPE China www.epegroup.com ¶													
Standard Full Length 2.5	183 x 51 x 2.5	1200			R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	Open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●		70
Standard Full Length 3.5	183 x 51 x 3.5	1400			R	As above	As above	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	Equal heaviest mat in survey	80
Shaped Cored Regular	183 x 51 x 2.5	800	Short	700	M	As above	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●		110
Exped Taiwan www.exped.com ¶													
Downmat 7 Regular	178 x 52 x 7	790	Deluxe, Short	580	R	Ripstop polyester upper, non-slip base	700-fill down	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Waterproof stuff sack doubles as mat-inflating aid	230
Downmat 9 Regular	178 x 52 x 9	940	Deluxe		R	As above	As above	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	As above	250
Insulmat China www.insulmat.com ¶													
Ether Thermo 6 Regular	183 x 51 x 6.3	600	Long, Short, Women's	460	M	Ripstop polyester upper, non-slip base	Synthetic fill	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Clever design provides excellent comfort and weight at a very affordable price; hard-anodised aluminium valve	85
AO Lite Regular	183 x 51 x 2.5	540	As above	360	M	Ripstop polyester upper, ripstop base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●●	Lightest of the full-length mats surveyed; hard-anodised aluminium valve	120
Cruiser MTN Regular	183 x 51 x 5	870	Women's		TR	Brushed polyester upper, non-slip base	As above	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	Hard-anodised aluminium valve	140
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au													
Compact 2.5 Long	183 x 51 x 2.5	800	Short	560	R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●		120
Hike 3.8	183 x 51 x 3.8	1100	Short	800	R	As above	Open-cell foam	●●●	●●	●●●	●●		130
Compact 3.8 Honeycomb	183 x 51 x 3.8	900	Short	560	R	As above	Cored, open-cell foam	●●●	●●	●●●	●●		150
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com.au													
Mountain Light 3.8 Standard	183 x 51 x 3.8	750	Short	540	R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●		130
Mountain Pro 2.5 Standard	180 x 61 x 2.5	650	Short	410	TR	Ripstop polyester upper, non-slip base	As above	●●	●	●●	●●●●	Urethane dots on base make it very grippy	140
Mountain Pro 3.8 Standard	180 x 61 x 3.8	740	Short	480	TR	As above	As above	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	As above	150
Outdoor Expedition China www.raysoutdoors.com.au ¶													
Hemisphere	183 x 51 x 2.5	800	Short	600	R	Ripstop polyester upper, ripstop base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●		120
Hemisphere Mummy	183 x 51 x 2.5	800			M	As above	As above	●●	●	●●	●●●		120
Roman Taiwan www.roman.com.au ¶													
Moon Mat Standard Long	185 x 51 x 3.8	1300	Short	600	R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	Repair kit not included	125
Moon Mat Standard Tapered Long	185 x 51 x 3.8	1000			TR	As above	As above	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	As above	130
Therm-a-Rest USA www.thermarest.com													
Trail Lite	183 x 51 x 3.8	910	Short, Women's	600	R	Polyester upper, polyester base	Open-cell foam	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	Stuff sack and repair kit not included	100
ProLite 3	183 x 51 x 2.5	570	As above	370	R	Ripstop polyester upper, non-slip base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●	Extremely light and compact mat; very grippy base; stuff sack and repair kit not included	180
Tough Skin	183 x 51 x 3.8	1140	Short	750	R	Textured polyester upper, polyester base	Open-cell foam upper, closed-cell foam base	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	Highly puncture resistant; stuff sack and repair kit not included	220
Vango China www.vango.co.uk ¶													
Ultralite Full	183 x 51 x 2.5	650	Short	430	TR	Ripstop nylon upper, non-slip nylon base	Cored, open-cell foam	●●	●	●●	●●●●	Repair kit not included	100
Standard Full	183 x 55 x 3.8	1400			R	Non-slip polyester upper and base	As above	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	Equal heaviest mat in survey	120
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Shape: Mummy, Rectangular, TR tapered rectangular Comments: unless otherwise specified, a stuff sack and repair kit are included Exped deluxe mats are a longer, wider mat ¶ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made													

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- Versatile: Can be used as a double-wall tent for full protection or in two free-standing tarp-shelter modes with footprint (sold separately).
- Liveable: Vestibule area provides dry entry, gear storage and a covered food-prep area.



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The two-person **HubbaHubba II** has two doors, and weighs a paltry 1.8 kg.

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- Quick and easy set-up: All-in-one hub and swivel-pole design is simple to use.
- Versatile: Can be used as a double-wall tent for full protection or in three free-standing tarp-shelter modes with footprint (sold separately).
- Liveable: Both vestibules provide dry entry, gear storage and covered food-prep areas.
- No-drip entries: Flies/doors won't drip inside tent, so doors can be opened for additional venting options in light weather.



Mutha Hubba™

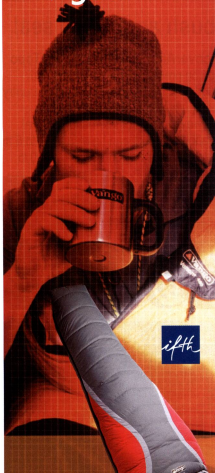
The mother of all Hubbas – the **Mutha Hubba** is MSR's lightest, most liveable three-person tent.

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*IFTH (Institut Français Textile - Habillement)



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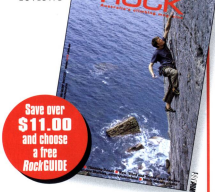
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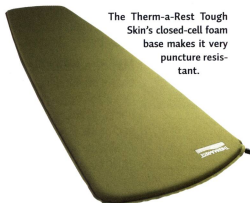
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shone through in the comfort stakes, and in my opinion down-fill and synthetic-fill mats were clearly superior. On the slimmest, heavily cored models I could actually feel the hard ground even when the mat was fully inflated. Lighter individuals might not have this issue, but for me the weight saving is not worth the penalty! As in the previous two columns, the shorter mats don't score quite as highly as their longer stablemates as users will have to adapt their sleeping position. These compromises will be outweighed by the reduced pack weight for some, but other people may find the reduced comfort level is not worth the weight saved.

Value

Purchasing a lightweight sleeping mat is an important investment in your bushwalking enjoyment. Having taken almost half the brands in this survey out in the field, I think that a good mat is as important as a good sleeping bag. The value rating is based on a long-term



The Therm-a-Rest Tough Skin's closed-cell foam base makes it very puncture resistant.

view of the performance and durability of the product, against the purchase price and any benefits in weight and volume savings. In the case of the best-performing products, the extra warmth and comfort are worth the extra expense. Unless specified, mats come with a stuff sack and repair kit—if not, consider the additional price of these.

Approximate price

The prices in this survey are recommended retail prices provided by distributors. These were all verified by prices in retail outlets.

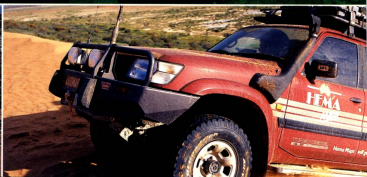
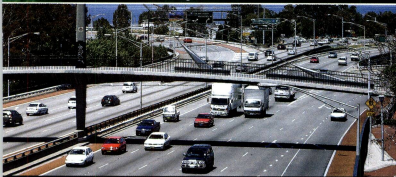
Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
High Country	Aussie Disposals	(03) 9799 8888
Mitchells	Mitchell's Adventure	(03) 9670 8550
Wild Country	Rays Outdoors	(03) 5278 7633

As an outdoor educator and Duke of Edinburgh Award coordinator, Jim Graham frequently gets to field test and compare a range of products. Bushwalking remains his passion and the New Zealand wilderness is his favourite classroom.

The survey was refereed by Simon Langford.

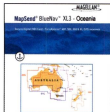
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Alert! Changes to beacons

John Chapman explains how Personal Locator Beacons are evolving

A major change to Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs), Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELTs) and Emergency Position-Indicating Beacons (EPIRBs) is under way. After 1 February 2009 the old distress beacon, operating on the 121.5 MHz frequency, will no longer be monitored. While the old frequency generally worked, it had some major problems. The biggest issue for rescue services was the high number of false alarms, caused by anything from discarded units in tips, to pizza ovens and ATMs. Only two in 1000 alerts were real, but all had to be checked. The system could only determine location within a 15–25 kilometre accuracy, while the satellite had to be visible to both the PLB and a ground station at the same time. A lot of resources were wasted searching for non-existent emergencies.

With problems increasing as more units obtained beacons, the four countries operating the scheme—USA, Canada, France and Russia—worked to improve the system. The biggest change is that the base frequency is now 406 MHz. Satellite use has changed, with four geosynchronous satellites picking up the initial signal, and weather satellites used to confirm the alert and pinpoint its position. Initial signal detection now takes around three minutes (down from an average of one hour) providing more time to prepare rescue crews. The new system is digitally based and each unit must be registered in the country of its intended use, with differences in unit identification. Units will work globally but have to be registered locally, so don't purchase units in other countries. The accuracy of the system has been improved to two-five kilometres, while units incorporating a GPS are accurate to within 120 metres. The new units also transmit the old 121.5 MHz signal as well, but only for the benefit of search aircraft.

For rescue services, the changes have improved the rate of real alerts to about 80 in 1000 (one in 12 signals). The beacon owner is then contacted (usually by telephone) and 70 per cent of alerts can be immediately cancelled. Resources must then be dispatched to determine whether a rescue is required; however, this is a huge improvement with real alerts at around one in four instead of one in 500. The new system can also detect the type of unit triggered and send the appropriate service for boat, aircraft or land-based rescue. EPIRBs are designed for boats, ELTs are for aircraft and PLBs are for individual adventure usage.

PLBs using the 406 MHz system for adventurers are now far more practical to carry, with weights ranging from 220 to 350 grams and priced at \$400–600.

In recent times, some adventurers have activated beacons for the wrong reasons. Beacons are to be used as a 'system of last resort', in situations of 'grave or imminent danger'. In Queensland, one person was recently fined \$30 000 for deliberately activating an EPIRB when not in danger. More fines may follow.

Low Alpine pumps it up

Do you remember those Reebok Pumps worn by every cool kid in the early 1990s? Now **Low Alpine** have brought a little bit of that technology to the world of packs. Lowe's new **expedition pack**, the **Summit 65 + 15** (3.26 kilograms) comes with the TFX 9 micro adjustment harness system, which utilises a small pump to inflate or deflate the lumbar pad for a perfect fit. Not only will it make you popular with your peers, but it will also make carrying heavy loads a breeze. The Summit also comes in a women's model, the **Summit ND 65 + 15** (3.18 kilograms) which is not simply a 'pinked and shrinked' men's model, but a pack designed specifically for women. Both packs have integral rain covers, a full-front-entry zipper and extendable lids (convertible to 17 litre day packs), making it possible to increase their volume by 15 litres. RRP \$549. For more information, contact **Intertek** on (02) 9476 0672.



To find the light, seek the Shadow

One Planet has added a new **lightweight pack** to its range, the **Shadow**. Produced in its Melbourne factory, the Shadow features the new Mini Plus harness which, in combination with a simple sack design, keeps the weight of the 60 litre pack (the largest back length) down to just 1.62 kilograms. The Shadow is said to strike a good compromise between the support of a heavier pack and the lightness of less supportive, ultralight models, while remaining incredibly durable. Available in three back lengths and two harness sizes (including one for women), the Shadow retails for \$279. Visit www.oneplanet.com.au to find out more.



Synthetic delights

One Planet has released a new range of **synthetic sleeping bags**, the **SAC** series. Going by the adventurous names of **SAC1** (+4°C), **SAC2** (-2°C) and **SAC3** (-6°C), these bags are all independently rated to the European standard and filled with a unique insulation system comprising X-Static silver fibre, 3D spiral-fibre thermal barrier and a woven suspension system of hollow fibres. Very complicated, but apparently the silver has antimicrobial and anti-odour properties, and also reduces the loss of radiant heat through its reflective properties. The bags weigh from 930 grams to 1.46 kilograms, and are priced from \$149 to \$169.

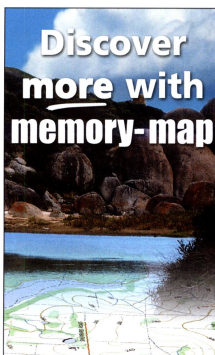
Mountain Hardwear also has a new synthetic sleeping bag, the **Ultralamina 32**, which weighs in at 870 grams while still being rated to 0°C. ThermicMicro insulation and patented, welded construction keep the bag light and warm, while unique, dual-entry half-zips allow users to sit up with their arms free and cook or read while still keeping warm—very shmic. The Ultralamina 32 retails for \$349. Contact **Mountain Hardwear Australia** on (07) 3114 4311.

The One Planet pack is a Shadow of its heavier stablemates. **Top**, the Summit 65 + 15, complete with inbuilt pump! **Below**, snug as a bug in a Ultralamina 32.

DrizaBone now dyed in the wool

The name **DrizaBone** immediately conjures up a certain image, a man from Snowy River figure—big coat, Akubra, smells like a horse—you know the type. That mythical figure can now be attired in DrizaBone's new range of **merino thermals**, made from 100 per cent Australian merino wool—fortunately, very odour resistant. Two of the most popular items are the **Midweight Half Zip** and the **Long Sleeve Fitted T**, both of which are soft enough to wear against the skin. Made from extremely high-quality merino wool, apparently the sight of these bring a warm glow to the hearts of Australian farmers as well as to bushwalkers. RRP \$199.95 and \$119.95, respectively. For more information, visit www.drizaboneactiv.com





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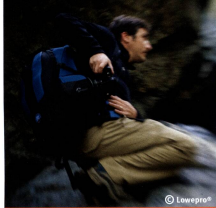
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Knick-Knacks

For Quark's sake!

The Mountain Hardwear Quark Jacket is another offering for the 'fast and light' market who want 'maximum weather protection at a minimum weight'. The fully breathable Quark is made from Incite and uses a patented zWeld construction: apparently it is the first welded garment made from stretchy materials, allowing complete freedom of movement whilst weighing only 284 grams! RRP \$399.

You don't have to put out the red light

Guyot Designs has released a clever new light; the brilliant Firefly Bottle Lantern is basically a lid that incorporates three ultra-bright LEDs



The Firefly Bottle Lantern captures that inner glow. **Top right**, the Injinji toe-sock in action.

and replaces the lid of your wide-mouth water bottle. Suitable for GSI and Nalgene bottles, the Firefly works best when bottles are full and includes a dimmer switch. Depending on the colour of your water bottle, it gives off a very pleasing light. Those who own red bottles should beware of leaving them outside their tent. RRP \$37. Contact Spelean on 1800 634 853.

Want street cred back-country?

The stylish new Credo glove from OR is apparently brilliant for dry days in back-country snow, as well as having street appeal for the urban traveller. Highly breathable soft-shell fabric with a nylon face, teamed with a brushed-fleece interior, makes for a toasty combination. Sized from small to extra large; RRP \$59.95. Speak to Intertek to find out more.

Four eyes?

With half the team at Wild short-sighted (but extremely good-looking), these handy handles

for the visually impaired immediately appealed. The next time someone kicks sand in your face, you can pull out your Lens Cleaning Kit, featuring a lens cleaner and cloth in a handy, clip-on case. RRP \$16.95. Call Sea to Summit on (08) 9221 6617. Or simply stop them flying off with EK's 3-Way Eyewear Retainers from Intertek, offering—you guessed it—three ways of keeping those precious glasses out of the sand. RRP \$14.95.

Viva la revolution

Apparently the Injinji performance toe-socks are a revolution in socks. Toe-socks are to socks what gloves are to mittens, with toe-socks said to allow each toe individual freedom, keeping it blister-free and improving air and blood circulation. Injinji socks are said to marry the properties of modern fabrics and sophisticated construction with the garden-variety, stripey toe-sock, producing a new level of comfort and performance. The socks come in two ranges, the Performance series—70 per cent Coolmax—and the Outdoor series, made from Australian merino wool. For more information, visit www.injinji.com.au



Trix

Forgot the hills hoist?

David Adderley on drying your clothes in the tent

Clothes often get wet while walking, especially in Tasmania. The best way to dry them is to hang them up using Velcro attached to the inside of your tent. The prickly part of the Velcro (the hooks) can be permanently stuck to the tent with double-sided tape or even sewn in if the inner tent is not a waterproof layer. Wet clothes can then be stuck to the Velcro when you go to bed. Socks and thermals stick very well but other clothes may not. The trick is to attach the seams of the clothing to the Velcro, allowing it to get a better grip. A selection of patches and strips can be used in this way. If your clothes are soaking, be sure to wring them out first—outside the tent. This means they dry quicker and ensures you won't wake up with a wet sleeping bag.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to Wild) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD or by email), are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au

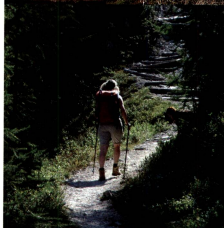
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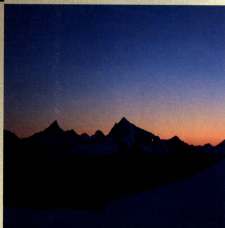
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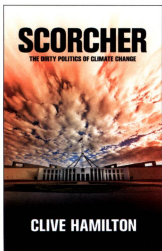


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Scorcher

BY CLIVE HAMILTON (BLACK INC AGENDA, 2007, RRP \$29.95, www.blackincbooks.com).

As I read *Scorcher: the Dirty Politics of Climate Change*, I found myself wishing that it had been written by a conspiracy theorist or, failing that, was about a country with which I had no connection. However, Hamilton's authority is evident throughout his carefully researched, clearly argued book, and the Australia he describes sounds horribly familiar. *Scorcher* details how the Howard Government's close relationship with big corporations (the self-named 'greenhouse mafia') has led to a decade of domestic inaction on climate change, as well as efforts to derail the Kyoto protocol in order to protect our resource exports. Hamilton demonstrates how a compliant media, a lot of spin and the Australian public's preference for lies over unpalatable truths have aided the situation, leaving us with some serious catching up to do. Well written and easy to follow, *Scorcher* is essential reading.

Megan Holbeck

Baw Baw National Park and Walkhalla Historic Area

(BUSH MAPS VICTORIA, 2007, RRP \$9.25).

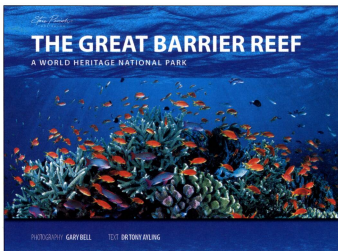
The VMTC acronym may have disappeared, but the style of this latest map by Stuart Brookes is instantly recognisable. Printed at a scale of 1:50 000, with 100 metre contours to help show topography, *Baw Baw* covers the area between Walkhalla and the Baw Baw Plateau, including the first stages of the Australian Alps Walking Track and areas bordering the Thomson Dam. As is usual with Brookes's maps, it's printed in three colours and includes useful features and labels of particular use to walkers, which you can't find on many other maps of the region.

Glen van der Knijff

Blue Mountains Best Bushwalks

BY VEECHI STUART (WOODSLANE PRESS, 2006, RRP \$29.99, www.woodslane.com.au).

This small book describes more than 60 day walks in the Blue Mountains between Mt Victoria and



Glennbrook. Each walk is well described, not only with notes, but also with a map and a profile showing height losses and gains. A multitude of colour photographs by Scott Townsend greatly enhance the text.

The descriptions seem very good. The only error I could find was a reference to Dr Dark as the author Eleanor Dark's father, rather than her husband. Recommended.

David Noble

This Is the Sea Three DVD

BY JUSTINE CURGENVEN (CACKLE TV PRODUCTIONS, 2006, RRP \$59.95, www.macstyle.com.au).

I could not wait to see this, the third in Justine Curgenven's series of DVDs, and I was not disappointed. The opening scenes show exactly what competent sea kayakers can do with their boats in races off the coast of Scotland. The scope then widens to take in tales from such characters as Paul Caffyn: among other exploits, he's paddled right round Australia. Also featured are a variety of other characters, all experts in their field, and expeditions to stunning areas of the world accessible by sea kayak. The highlight for locals is footage of the Australian expedition led by Andrew McAuley that paddled 800 kilometres down the Antarctic Peninsula. Despite some appalling conditions, the beauty and majesty of this area shine through. This is a fitting tribute to McAuley, who was lost at sea within 60 kilometres of his goal, New Zealand, after a 30-day solo kayak crossing of the Tasman Sea from Tasmania early in 2007. This DVD is a must for any serious sea kayaker's library.

John Wilde

Sustainability

BY ALEX COLLEY (ENVIROBOOK, 2007, RRP \$19.95, www.envirobook.com.au).

In *Sustainability*, eminent Australian Alex Colley sets out a blueprint for a sustainable economy and a harmonious society. Colley discusses the primary causes of environmental destruction and charts a step-by-step plan for sustainable solutions. Like most environmental economists, Colley focuses on economic growth as a problem to be tackled. Some contemporary

thinkers are now trying to decouple growth from environmental impact—and, according to Colley, the solution is out there. Alex Colley is clearly one of Australia's foremost environmental and economic thinkers. His prescription for a sustainable future is straightforward and full of common-sense ideas. At 97 years of age, Colley displays wisdom and insight that is truly remarkable.

Eli Greig

The Kokoda Challenge DVD

DIRECTED BY LEE TICEHURST (POM PRODUCTIONS, 2006, RRP \$45, www.kokodadvd.com).


The Kokoda Challenge: A Walker's Guide to the Kokoda Trail is a close-up of Papua New Guinea's Kokoda Trail, accompanied by a dry but accurate monologue describing the walking track itself. It describes the route, camping and walking conditions, and typical food provided as part of an organised trek. The sections on equipment and fitness will be useful to those who have little idea of what to expect. This DVD will appeal to inexperienced people wanting all the information they can get as part of their preparation.

Rod Bateman

The Great Barrier Reef

BY GARY BELL AND TONY AYLING (STEVE PARISH PUBLISHING, 2007, RRP \$59.95, www.steveparish.com.au).

Immerse yourself in the immeasurable magic of the Great Barrier Reef. Packed with flowing, informative text, astounding facts and awe-inspiring images, this book explores all aspects of life on the reef—from the minuscule plankton to the charismatic megafauna, the delicate to the dangerous.

There are estimated to be more plants and animals in one cubic metre of the reef than in any other environment in the world. This publication evokes the sensation of being fully submerged and meeting each sea creature personally. A 'must have' for any marine enthusiast. 

Isla Fitridge

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Matthew Trounsen (left) and Rhys Davies explore the photographic possibilities of a light bulb found on Meerim Beach, just north of Hibbs Point on Tasmania's west coast.
Rhys Davies

Matthew Trounsen was tragically killed on 29 June 2007 three days after his 26th birthday. He was a humble but extraordinarily skilled and experienced bushman who would throw himself wholeheartedly at whatever was at hand and would never utter a negative word. He will be sorely missed. Deepest sympathies to his family and the many others who loved him.

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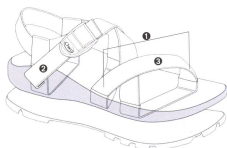


- ① Aggressive arch support controls pronation
- ② Sculpted heel cup centres the foot's natural shock-absorbing pad under the heel bone
- ③ Heel riser increases lateral stability
- ④ Multiple widths ensure proper fit

→ Gender-specific design accounts for subtle width, length and volume differences in men's and women's feet

Adjustable fit

Since 1989, all Chaco sport sandals have featured our anatomical pull-through strap system. This system provides complete adjustability to maximise fit, while eliminating the bulk and stiffness of overlapping Velcro®.



- ① Anatomical strap placement cradles the foot at the first and fifth metatarsal bones for biomechanical fit
- ② Continuous pull-through straps and adjustable buckle-strap conform to any foot shape
- ③ Soft polyester webbing dries faster than nylon and maintains a consistent fit in all conditions

Womens



Z1 Basil



Z2 Heather



ZX1 Bluebell



ZX2 Blush

* The APMA Seal of Acceptance is intended to raise consumer awareness by identifying products of exceptional quality that are manufactured with comfort, health, and safety in mind.

All Chaco Sandals have been awarded the Seal of Acceptance by the APMA.

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